The WONDERFUL STORY of JESUS

Illustrated By Ella Dolbear Lee

To.
Raymond Frederick Klinger.
From
Uncle Fred & Aunt Rose.
Christmas
1929.

The Wonderful Story of Jesus

The Angel Appearing to the Shepherds

THE WONDERFUL STORY OF JESUS

ILLUSTRATED

BY

ELLA DOLBEAR LEE

IN

FULL COLORS

MADE IN U. S. A.

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The Messenger of the King

MANY long years had gone by since Jeremiah the prophet cried his warnings in the streets of Jerusalem, and every one of those warnings had come true. The Jews were now a conquered people under the rule of the great Roman Empire, and although they were allowed to have a king, he was only a vassal, or servant king. The people felt bitterly the loss of their freedom, and they longed more and more for the great Deliverer whom God had promised to send—the King who was to sit on David's throne and make them once more a free people.

The time was drawing very near now when that promise was to be fulfilled. The coming of the King was close at hand. As in the early morning before sunrise the sky in the east is lit by a slow, soft light, which begins to spread upwards, faintly at first and then glowing into full glory as the sun appears, so there were already signs that the great Dawn was near, that the dark night of sin and sorrow was to fade before the Light of the World. God was sending a messenger to prepare the way of the King, and to tell the people of His coming.

It was at the time when a cruel king called Herod was ruling at Jerusalem that there lived at Hebron an old priest, Zacharias, and his wife Elisabeth. Theirs was a pleasant

home on the sunny slopes of the Judean hills. And it was a happy home, too, for both Zacharias and his wife served God and loved Him with all their hearts.

But although the home was a happy one, it was very quiet and rather lonely. No patter of children's feet had ever sounded there; no childish voices had ever broken the quiet. The old priest and his wife had longed to have a child; but the years passed on and they both grew old, and the hope died away. There was to be no son to bear their name.

Perhaps it was specially lonely for Elisabeth when her husband went to take his turn in the service of the beautiful Temple at Jerusalem; but she had grown accustomed to that. She never looked for any change, but just lived her quiet life day by day. She little thought that something was going to happen soon that would change her whole life.

Zacharias had gone up to the Temple to begin his share of the service, as he had so often done before. His part was to enter into the Holy Place where God's altar stood, and to swing the great golden censer before the altar, so that the fragrance of the incense should rise in its sweetness to heaven, together with the prayers of the people who knelt outside.

Now, suddenly, in the midst of his prayers, as he swung the golden censer, the old priest looked up, and saw through the blue smoke of the incense that he was not alone. There, on the right side of the altar, stood an angel, a shining messenger from God, a vision so glorious that at first Zacharias was afraid.

But the voice of the angel calmed his fears; and as he listened to the message which God had sent his heart almost

stood still with joy.

"Fear not, Zacharias," said the angel: "for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth."

He was to be a very special child, the angel went on to say, and he was to do a very special work, for which he must be carefully trained.

It all seemed so wonderful that Zacharias could scarcely believe it could be true, even as he listened to the angel's words. The doubt in his heart made him long for some sign, that he might be quite sure that God meant to give him a son.

There was no need for a sign. It was Gabriel, the angel who stood in the presence of God, who had brought him the message. That surely should have been sufficient proof that the message was true. But because Zacharias had doubted, the sign was given.

"Thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed," said the angel, "because thou believest not my words."

This was the news which the old priest brought home with him when the time of his service was ended; this was the wonderful happening which was to change the whole life of Elisabeth, the patient, lonely old woman.

The words of the angel Gabriel came true. God kept His promise and sent a little son to gladden the hearts of Zacharias and Elisabeth. But through all the months before the baby was born the old priest was dumb. Not a word could he speak, until the child was eight days old and it was time to give him his name.

"You will, of course, call him Zacharias, after his father," said the rejoicing relations and friends.

But Elisabeth answered quietly, "Not so! but he shall be called John."

That was not a family name, objected the relations; they were sure she was making a mistake. They would try, by making signs, to ask the dumb father what name he wanted.

Zacharias understood their signs, and as he could not speak he called for a writing tablet, and when it was brought he wrote clearly the words, "His name is John." Even as he wrote, proving by his words that he believed all the angel had said to him, God took away the punishment which had been sent to him because he had doubted. His speech came back, and he could now talk and thank God in beautiful words as well as silently in his heart.

It was all so strange, that as the people talked together and looked at the baby they asked each other, "What kind of child will this be?"

Then God's Holy Spirit filled the heart of the old priest, and taught him the wonderful song which we so often sing in church, beginning, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: for He hath visited and redeemed His people;" and going on to say, "And thou, child, shall be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways."

In that far-away country in those olden days the roads were often very rough and badly kept, and it was the custom when a king was to pass by that servants were sent a long way ahead, to clear the path and made it as smooth as possible before the king came. They would remove the stones,

clear away any branches of trees which might have fallen across the way, and tell all those they met to stand aside and leave the road clear for the coming of the king.

And this was the work which God had set for the little son of Zacharias and Elisabeth. Only it was not just an ordinary road that he was to prepare and keep clear, nor was it for any earthly king that the way was to be made ready. The King was Jesus Christ, the promised Deliverer; the road was the hearts of His people, who were neither ready nor fit to welcome Him.

As the little lad grew up, his father and mother would begin to tell him about the work he was to do; and they trained him carefully, too, as the angel had directed, making him hardy and strong both in mind and body. The King's messenger would need all his strength and courage to prepare that rough and crooked road before the coming of the King.

The Coming of the King

IT WAS springtime and the fields of Palestine were all decked with their spring flowers. The silver gray of the olive trees shone above a sea of scarlet anemones, the tender green of the vines was as fair as the flowers themselves. Round about the little village of Nazareth spring had smiled very kindly upon the land, and buds were unfolding on every side to meet her smile. The very name of the little village meant "flowery."

There in one of the little square houses built of white stone, a maiden was sitting sewing, and she seemed to belong to the spring and the flowers. No slender lily of the field was fairer than she, no white flower was purer than the heart of this village maiden. She was thinking happy thoughts as she sewed alone in her room that glad spring day, but she little knew that it was to be the most wonderful day of her life.

Suddenly, in the midst of her work, she felt she was not alone, and she stopped and looked up. There before her stood an angel, Gabriel, God's messenger, who was looking kindly down upon her. He called her by her name, Mary, and bade her not be afraid. But there was no fear in Mary's heart, she was not even startled. Her thoughts were so often with God that His messenger was welcome at any time.

The Wise Men bringing gifts to the Infant Jesus

"Hail, thou that art highly favoured," the angel Gabriel was saying, "the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women."

Mary looked up, wondering. She could not understand the meaning of these gracious words, but soon the wonderful truth dawned upon her. The angel told her that God had chosen her to be the mother of the Son of God, the Saviour and King, whose name was to be called "Jesus," for He would save His people from their sins.

There was no thought of self in Mary's heart. She did not say she was only a poor maiden unfit to be the mother of the King of Heaven. She was ready for God to use her as He would; she was His handmaid ready to fulfil His will.

It was in the happy springtime that the angel brought this message to Mary, but it was in the cold dark days of winter that the angel's promise came true.

Joseph, the village carpenter, Mary's promised husband, knew all about the angel's message, for God had told him too about the coming of the King, and had bidden him be a faithful guardian to his young wife.

Together one cold winter day they journeyed up to the little hill town of Bethlehem, to put their names upon the census roll, as the Roman governor had commanded. All the people had been ordered to go to their native cities to give in their names, and both Joseph and Mary belonged to Bethlehem, the city of David, for they were descendents of the shepherd king.

It had been a long journey, and Mary was tired, although she rode upon the shaggy back of the ass which Joseph so

carefully led. It was late, and the winding white road that led to the city gates was almost deserted, for they were the last travellers to come in. Already the twilight was darkening into night, and the stars began to hang out their silver lamps in the deep dark blue overhead.

At last the inn was reached, and Joseph inquired anxiously about a lodging. It was too late; every room was full, they could not possibly be taken in. Every house in the little town was crowded. The only thing to do was to shelter themselves for the night in one of the stable caves, where oxen and asses, camels and mules, were crowded together.

And it was here, in a poor stable, that very night, that Mary's Baby, the King of Heaven, was born. Such a poor welcome it seemed for a King! Only a handful of hay for His bed, only a wooden manger for His cradle, only a few swaddling bands to wrap round His little limbs, only His poor sweet mother to wait on Him, and the breath of the ox and the ass to warm Him.

But although no one in Bethlehem knew that a King had been born that night, although no bells rang out, no grand illumination marked His coming, yet His stars shone down in silent splendour, His angels sang His song of welcome, and Mary's heart was full of joy. She knew that it was God's Son she held in her arms, that the angel's promise had been fulfilled.

Outside the town, on the slopes of the hill, shepherds were watching their flocks, just as the shepherd boy David had done in the same fields long years before; and to them the herald angels sang their song, telling the news of the Baby's birth, while the golden gates of Heaven swung wide and

showed the glory within.

Soon the shepherds were kneeling in the little stable, worshipping the King; and as they knelt they told the young mother of all that they had seen out on the hillside, and repeated to her the angels' message: "Peace on earth, goodwill to men."

Later on, another company of men knelt to do homage to the Baby King. They were no rough shepherds from the hills this time, but stately men in rich robes who had journeyed from a far-distant land, led by a star to the place where the young Child lay. They brought to Him precious gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and laid them at His feet; but far more precious than any gifts was the worshipping love which both they and the humble shepherds offered to God as they knelt before Mary's son, the King of Heaven.

The Flight Into Egypt

THE Wise Men left the little house where Joseph and Mary lived with the Baby Christ, and went back on their camels to Jerusalem. As they rode slowly through the night, along the rough roads pale with dust and often strewn with stones, they must have looked back, sometimes, to where the beautiful star hung over the Lord Jesus' quiet village home.

The gates and roofs of Jerusalem were some way off; so presently the Wise Men would decide to make a camp among the hills, for the rest of the night. You see, they had travelled from countries on the other side of many plains and valleys; and they carried their tents, and their food, and their servants, and kitchens, with them.

Well, the servants set up the big comfortable tents, and the Wise Men went to rest. And then two of the angels of God came back to the hills and plains near Bethlehem.

They did not come, this time, in rainbows of light, with a great sweet anthem of gladness. They trod softly, and with folded wings, through the darkness; and one of them passed the servants who guarded the entrance of the tent where the Wise Men slept, lifted the fine inner curtains, and crossed the grassy floor on which rich mats were laid. Then he stooped and whispered a dream into the ears of the sleeping Kings.

The dream the angel whispered told them that they must not go back to Jerusalem—must not tell Herod where the little royal baby was to be found. They listened in their sleep, and, when they woke in the morning, they knew that an angel had whispered.

So they obeyed the dream that had come from God, and, rising, told their servants to fold the tents, pack up the food, and prepare for a long journey. Looking back towards the house of Joseph and Mary, they saw that the bright star had faded in the light of dawn. The Wise Men never went back to Jerusalem at all, but travelled home to their own countries by another way.

The other angel that came to the Bethlehem hills that night went to the little home under the great star.

He, too, crept softly, with folded wings, inside the door. Mary and Joseph and the Baby Christ were all fast asleep, with one little candle burning in the room. But presently Joseph stirred in his slumber, and half-opened his tired eyes.

He must have thought at first that the oil lamp was burning with a strange beauty, for the room was full of misty golden light. He opened his eyes more fully, and saw in his dream the glistening of white robes. Then it seemed as if the soft wings of some great bird fanned his face; and, sitting up on his low mattress, he saw that one of the angels of God was in the room.

The angel had a grave, beautiful face, and spoke earnestly. "Joseph," he said, "arise! Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word. For Herod will seek the young child to destroy Him."

The Flight into Egypt

When the angel had spoken, his earnest face, his white robes, and his shining wings began to grow dim. He faded from Joseph's sight, and only the light of the little lamp was in the room.

Joseph knew that he must obey the vision of the angel. The Baby Christ had already been taken to the Temple at Jerusalem to be blessed, and had been named Jesus. You will hear all about this in the next story, and about the great new Temple that Herod was building, in order to show his own greatness. Joseph remembered all this, and knew how angry Herod must be to think that another King had been born in the land. So he woke Mary, and, in the cold dawn, they began to put their things together. All day they spent in preparations, and, when night came, Joseph brought an ass to the door of the little house, Mary came out with the Baby Jesus, Joseph helped her to mount, and led the ass away, through the night, down the hilly path, on to the long, long road that led to Egypt.

When they were gone, and the Wise Men were gone also, Herod found that nobody could tell him where the little King of the Jews was to be found; and he was so angry that he had all the poor Bethlehem babies under two years old killed immediately. But the Infant Christ was safe in Egypt.

Joseph and Mary stayed in Egypt quite safely until Herod died. Then, one night, the angel appeared again in their little chamber, and told Joseph that he might take the Baby back. But when Joseph found out that Herod's son was reigning in his father's place he made up his mind that it would not be safe to go back to Bethlehem. While he was

wondering what to do, the angel came to him a third time.

This third time, the angel told him to go and live for good in the north of the Holy Land, at a place called Nazareth. So Joseph and Mary turned aside from Bethlehem on their return journey and went and settled at Nazareth, a strange high town built on the side of a mountain which had once been a volcano. Here Joseph set up again in business as a carpenter, and the little baby, who was to become so great and wonderful, grew up to be a boy.

The Glory Comes Back to the Temple

AMONG the many stories about Mount Moriah, where Herod's Temple now stood high in the sunlight, are three stories of angels.

The first angel was the guardian of little Isaac, whose voice saved the child and blessed his trusting father, Abraham. The second angel was one which appeared to David. The third was Gabriel himself, the great angel of whom Daniel used to dream, whose wings were wide, whose flight was swift and sure, and whose face was turned always towards the glory of God.

About the second angel you must read fully in the stories of David, the King and sweet psalmist of Israel. This messenger from God stood in the heights of the mountain at a time when there was much sickness in the land of Canaan, and a drawn sword was in his hand, stretched out over Jerusalem. The place on which his feet rested was a threshing-floor, flat, rocky, and open to the winds. And David, the King, saw this Angel of Death, and fell on his face and prayed. Then the great angel sheathed his sword, spread his wings and floated away; and the sickness was stayed. So David bought the threshing-floor, and had an altar built there to the Lord; and round about this altar Solomon reared the wonderful Temple you know about, and the Ark of God's Promise was brought there, and set up in

the Holy Place, behind the curtain that was called the Veil.

But, as you have been told, Solomon's beautiful Temple was broken down and burnt by a mighty King who brought big armies to fight against Israel from the land of the Chaldees; and the Ark of Jehovah was probably buried in the burning ruin. As the Lord had first spoken in the holy fires of a mountain, so in the unholy fires of another mountain His glory seemed to pass away. And His people were carried captives into Babylon, and many of them stayed there under the rule of the great Persian Kings.

Then one of these Persian Kings, who was called Cyrus, gave an order that the Temple of Jehovah, the God of Israel, was to be rebuilt. A man named Zerubbabel set up the altar again, and built God's house about it with three rows of great stones, and with timber from the King's own forests. And many of the gold and silver ornaments were brought back from Babylon—but the Ark of the Promise, with the holy Tablets of the Law inside it, was never again seen in the Temple of Jerusalem.

Zerubbabel's Temple—or, as some call it, the Temple of Nehemiah, who wrote a great book about it—lasted for five hundred years. It was dedicated with great joy by those faithful people at Jerusalem who believed that Jehovah's blessing would once more be poured upon them, but with bitter tears by those who remembered the lost glory and beauty of the House that Solomon had built.

And then, some time before the Baby Christ was born, Herod promised the people that he would set up a Temple even greater than that of Solomon—a building of snowy

marble and glittering brass. And to the altar in the heart of this still unfinished Temple, where carpenters and carvers were busy pulling down the old quiet courts of Zerubbabel and setting up the new splendid walls of Herod, the angel Gabriel came.

The angel showed himself at the hour of the evening service. A priest called Zacharias stood alone in the Holy Place. From the outer courts came the long, low murmur of hundreds of people at prayer. Zacharias was holding high the vessel of incense, from which the pale smoke wreathed about the altar, and the perfume of crushed spices rose; and suddenly, on the right of the altar, shone Gabriel's wings of light. It must have seemed to Zacharias, for a moment, as if Jehovah had descended once more upon the Mercy-Seat as in the days of old.

Gabriel told Zacharias that a son would shortly be born to him, who would be the prophet of the Highest, and would prepare the way for the coming Messiah, the God-given King of the Jews. And in due time this son of Zacharias was born. He was John the Baptist, and he did indeed prepare the hearts of the people for Jesus Christ.

Well, you may be quite sure

that the story of the angel Gabriel got abroad, and many priests who served in the Temple, and many faithful men and women who came there daily to pray, were waiting eagerly for the birth of the promised King. They told each other that the time must be very near; and some of them, who were old and weary, and waiting for death, whispered to the young ones a secret promise that was treasured deep in their hearts—a promise that they should not pass away before they had seen the Lord Christ.

One of these old people was called Simeon. Everybody knew him for a good and upright man; and on a certain day, just four weeks after the birth of the Holy Child at Bethlehem, Simeon felt something within urging him to go to the Temple. He was so old that the way seemed long to his tired feet, but, leaning on his staff, he mounted the steep steps, and reached a court with high columns all round it, which he entered through two great brass doors, called the Beautiful Gate. This court was the Court of the Women, and many women and children, and priests, and singers, were passing to and fro, shoeless, upon the marble floor. Simeon waited, and by and by his eyes fell upon a little group coming towards him—a man, a fair gentlewoman, and a tiny Baby held tenderly in the woman's arms.

The young mother paused and dropped some coins into a large box shaped like a trumpet which stood against the wall. The money was a thank-offering for her first-born Son, and was just as much as she would have paid for two pigeons, which poor people, in those days, offered to God when He sent them their first little boy. Simeon watched her pause, and his eyes dwelt earnestly upon the Child that she car-

ried. And then a vision unseen by the rest of the people in the Temple opened out for Simeon round the mother and the Child; and the old man saw that the whole Temple was bathed in the Glory of God.

He went forward and took the tiny Baby in his arms, and rapt words fell from his lips, while his face, so worn and furrowed, was radiant with joy.

"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word! For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation! Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people! A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel!"

Joseph and Mary heard the words fall from Simeon's lips, and they looked, in grave wonder, from the old man to the little Child. Then Simeon gave the Holy Baby back into His mother's arms; lifted high his hands, and blessed the parents of the sacred infant that lay so calmly against Mary's bosom. And Simeon told them that the Child had been sent for a wonderful sign, and that, though many in Israel should fall away from Him, yet, through Him, they should rise again.

And then, just as Joseph and Mary were going to take the Baby away, an old, old woman came slowly across the marble floor towards where the little group stood. She, too, saw the vision of beauty that seemed to surround them; and she echoed Simeon's poem of joy, and gazed with glad eyes upon the child. And so, with the grave promises given by the aged pair ringing softly in their ears, Mary and Joseph left the Temple and went home.

After that, the Wise Men came and spread the news of

the star, and the little Baby Christ was, as you know, taken to Egypt, and then brought back to Nazareth, where he grew up in the grace of God.

"My Father's Business"

ARY and Joseph were quite poor people, and Joseph worked as a carpenter at Nazareth, and had all sorts of things to make—yokes and carts for the oxen, and the wooden parts of the strange Palestine ploughs.

As the Lord Jesus grew out of babyhood into boyhood, He began to learn the carpenter's work; and was taught to use hammers and axes and iron tools, just as Joseph did. He must have thought, often, of how Joseph's ancestors worked for God; because among those ancestors was not only that very Bezaleel into whose heart Jehovah had put the wisdom and craftsmanship of a great artist, but also the architect Zerubbabel, who had set up the Temple that Herod was now pulling down to replace with his own magnificent building.

The Child, we read, was filled with wisdom. It dwelt in his heart, for He had come straight to the world from God Himself. There, working among the long, stripped logs of timber—trees brought perhaps from other countries in big ships, or cedars from Lebanon, or palms from Jericho—was the little boy who knew the secrets of the God who, in the Garden of Eden, had planted the Tree of Life. Perhaps He dreamt of those old goodly trees—who can tell? Perhaps as he cut and carved the wood He sang softly to Himself the song of Isaiah, with its fragrant promise: "I will plant in

the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle and the oil-tree! I will set in the desert the fir-tree and the pine and the box tree together!" We cannot tell what His thoughts were exactly, but we know that as He grew in body, so He grew strong in spirit, and was filled with the wisdom that is of God.

His mother must often have thought of Him, wonderingly, as she went about her quiet daily work—grinding corn in the morning with the help of a neighbor, baking cakes from the flour, and going to the well at sunset to fill her pitchers with cool water. Each dawn she would set wide the door of the little house, even before the sun had risen over the distant hills of Galilee; each dusk would see her light her little lamp of oil and set it in the window. Then the family would gather for supper, and perhaps talk over the old tales of Israel. Because, you know Galilee was a country in which there were many strangers, or Gentiles, as they were called, and they had their own history, which was not the history of the people who still worshipped the Lord Jehovah.

Then came the day when the Holy Child was twelve years old—the age at which the Jewish boys were taken for the first time to the great feasts held at Jerusalem.

So the boy, Christ Jesus, set off with his parents on a three days' journey, through the hills and plains of Samaria, to the Temple on the Holy Hill, for the great festival of the Passover. The faithful Israelites who dwelt in Nazareth were not very many in number, but were enough to make up into what were called "companies." These little groups kept together on the road and shared food and lodgings. On the way up to Jerusalem, Jesus kept with his parents. When

they got there everybody took their offerings to the priests at the Temple, and worshipped there for three days, in memory of the time when Jehovah had brought them safely out of Egypt; and then they set off for home again.

There must have been no little crowding and pushing at the different gates of Jerusalem as all the companies, with their asses, and their carts, and their camels, set out soon after dawn to return to the homes that were scattered through the length and breadth of Palestine; and in the confusion Mary and Joseph missed their little son. But they felt sure He must be among their friends from Nazareth, and they started

without misgiving. As the day wore on, the road through Samaria grew quieter, emptied of all except those who were going in the direction of Nazareth. And then Joseph began to move from group to group, seeking the boy Jesus. But He was nowhere to be found in the different companies of travellers; and in dismay and anxiety His parents turned back to Jerusalem.

For three days they sought Him in the busy city, searching through the sheep-market, and the singers' houses, and the great theatre and hippodrome that the Greeks and Romans had built under Herod. But He was in none of these places; and at last they found Him—where do you think? Within the holy shadows of the Temple of Jehovah itself!

He was seated, a young, slender, earnest boy, in the midst of the grave old doctors of learning; and He was asking them all sorts of questions about the Books of the Law of Jehovah, and the story of the Holy Tent, and the rod of Aaron, and the Garden of Wonderful Trees. Sometimes He listened gravely to their answers. But sometimes He shook His young fair head. And all who listened to Him were amazed.

Then His parents drew near, rejoicing, though still hurt and grieved with the memory of their great anxiety. And His mother told Him how long and how sorrowfully they had looked for Him. But His eyes were full of dreams as He heard her, and tried to make her understand.

"I must be about My Father's business," he explained earnestly; but Mary and Joseph did not know the meaning of it all.

And then, in obedience, after one last look around His

Father's house, the Boy Jesus went away with His parents, back to His earthly duty and His heavenly dreams, in the carpenter's shop, on the slopes of the warm Nazarene hill.

The Bible does not tell us much about Christ until He was grown-up, and began to go among the people, teaching them, loving them, healing their sick, and raising their dead. But we know just what Nazareth was like, and that its slopes were green with vineyards, and its wild flowers quite as beautiful as those which grew all about the Sea of Galilee. The carpenter's shop was not a part of Joseph's house, but would be right in the middle of the bazaar, where, all day long, the people bought and sold. Those who wanted their ploughs mended, or made, or any planks sawn for their houses, would come to the shop, and give their orders to Joseph; while the Boy Jesus would stand listening, ready to help in whatever was required.

How little the people in the bazaar, talking, laughing, and bargaining knew that that earnest-faced child was the true Light of the World.

St. John, The Baptist

ALL this time, while the Boy Jesus was living His quiet life in the little village of Nazareth, learning to prepare Himself for His Father's work, another boy, only a few months older, was also being trained to help in that work.

This boy was John, the son of the old priest Zacharias, of whom the angel had said that he should be the messenger sent before the King to prepare His way before Him.

It was not an easy life that John led. He had no fine clothes or soft bed or dainty food. Elisabeth, his mother, must have found it hard, too, not to give her only son all the pleasures and treats which boys so much enjoy. But she never thought of pleasing herself. She knew that the boy must be trained to endure hardness, to make him a fit messenger of the King, and she taught him from the very beginning the two great lessons of obedience and self-denial.

As soon as he was old enough he left the comfortable, happy home at Hebron, and far away out in the wilderness he lived his hard life alone, without friends or companions. Robbers there were in those wild, lonely places, but there was nothing they could rob him of. Wild beasts prowled about at night, but he was brave and fearless, and under the light of the stars he slept as peacefully as if he had been at home. His dress was a rough garment, made of camel's hair,

with a leather girdle round his waist, and his food was what the poorest beggars ate—locusts and the honey which the wild bees stored away in the rocks.

But in the loneliness of that hard life the King's messenger learned many things. God seemed very near in the quiet wilderness. God's voice sounded clearly when no other voice was in his ear. Night and day he thought only of the work that lay before him, until his whole heart was filled with the great desire to make the road ready for the King's feet. He knew how full of sin were the hearts of the people to whom the King was coming. He knew how much must be done before that road could be made a royal highway.

It was on the banks of the river Jordan that he began his work. There he stood and preached to the people, a wild, strange figure in his camel's hair coat, and leathern girdle. His face was weather-beaten and sun-burnt, his hair was untrimmed, and he wore rough sandals upon his bare feet. His appearance certainly would not draw any one to listen to him. But as soon as he began to speak the people were held spell-bound,

and crowds gathered round him. The news of this wonderful preacher who spoke such burning words spread from town to town and from village to village, and the people flocked out to the wilderness to hear him.

It seemed a strange message that this wild-looking messenger preached. The King was coming, he told them, the King for whom they had waited so long; but they were not fit to welcome Him.

He did not only say your hearts are evil and you are wicked; he told them exactly what the sins were that were making their hearts so black and unworthy of the King's approach.

There were greedy people who had all they wanted, and never shared what they had with other people. These, he said, must give of their good things to the poor, who had nothing. He told the rough soldiers that they must not be cruel, nor must they take away things by force from defenceless people. Rich and poor alike, he told them plainly what were the many bad things they were doing, and how they must put an end to them before the King came.

There he stood, a lonely man in the midst of a great crowd, one voice on the side of God sounding in the ears of men who were more accustomed to the voice of the Evil One. But he was never afraid. He never thought of himself at all, only of the coming King, and with all his greatness and power he was as humble as a little child.

The people who listened to him began at last to think he was a very great prophet—perhaps even the King Himself; and one day they came and asked him plainly if this was so, if he was indeed the Christ.

The Boy Jesus

"No," answered St. John at once. "I am nothing. I am but the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord." He was but the servant going before; the King was near at hand, whose shoes he was not even worthy to stoop down and unloose.

Now, as St. John preached to the people and told them how bad they were, some of them were very sad at heart, and wanted to live better lives; and then St. John baptized them in the river, to show that they were really sorry. Just as unclean things can be washed in water and made clean again, so it was a sign to show that they wanted their black hearts to be made white.

But one day, as St. John was baptizing, he looked up, and saw the King there, standing among the crowd.

No one knew that this was the King. He had no royal robes, no crown on His head. His hands were roughened with work, and He wore the dress of an ordinary poor peasant. Even St. John himself did not know Him, though something told him that he was in the presence of One mightier and holier than himself. So, when the King drew near and asked to be baptized among the rest, he was not willing to baptize Him at first. "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" he said. He would rather have knelt humbly at His feet. But Jesus wished to set a good example to others; and as the King had made known His will the servant could but obey.

Then it was that St. John, who had not recognized his Lord before, knew indeed that the King was there, for the gates of Heaven were opened wide, and God's Holy Spirit like a dove came down and rested upon Him, while God's

voice sounded through the blue, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Others besides St. John heard that voice, and hearing it, left their teacher to follow the great Master. There was never a thought of self in the humble heart of God's messenger, and he was glad that people should leave him to follow the King. "He must increase, but I must decrease," he said. "He must grow greater and greater, while I grow less."

It was quite true. In a few months the messenger's voice was no longer heard on the banks of the Jordan. St. John no longer breathed the free air of the desert. Shut up in a dark dungeon, he waited the pleasure of King Herod Antipas, whose soldiers had seized him and dragged him to the Black Castle which overlooked the sad waters of the Dead Sea.

St. John feared no man. He had not hesitated to tell even a king that he was doing wrong, and so King Herod had determined to silence his accusing voice.

For one long year St. John lived in that dismal dungeon, and when at last the door was opened, it was a door through which he passed into the presence of God.

Suddenly one night, when a gay birthday feast was going on in the palace, a soldier entered the dungeon, carrying in his hands a sword and a golden dish. With one blow the prisoner's head was cut off, and borne away to the banqueting hall.

It was an easy matter to kill the body, but no one could kill the soul of the King's messenger. They could only set it free like a bird from a snare. The servant's work was ended. The voice that had cried aloud to prepare the way of

the Lord was silent now, but his words could never die.

Beheaded in a dark dungeon, lonely and friendless, the words spoken by the angel Gabriel before his birth, "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord," had indeed come true.

And the King, the Lord whom St. John served, said of His faithful servant these golden words: "Among them that are born of woman there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."

The Work of the King

AT LAST the time came when Jesus must leave the little quiet Nazareth village, and begin His Father's work. There were so many poor people in the dark world waiting for the Light, so much suffering and pain and sin waiting for healing touch of His hand and His gracious word of forgiveness.

But although He was God, the Light of the world, who could forgive sins, yet He was Man too, and He never saved Himself from any of our hardships and temptations. The devil tempted Him just as he tempts each one of us now; and He often suffered hunger and pain, and many a night He had no place in which to shelter, or pillow on which to lay His head.

The story of His wonderful work has often been told—how He opened the eyes of poor blind men, healed the sick, fed the hungry, comforted the sorrowful, brought back life to the dead, and, more than all, taught people to know that God was their Father, and loved each one of them. But among all the stories of this wonderful life, children always love to remember the special times when Jesus had time to think of them, and to speak to them as well as to the grown-up people, and how the children of long ago showed their love for Him as well.

Hozannah in the Highest

THE WORK OF THE KING

It was one day when Jesus was passing a little village that He sat down to rest for a while under the cool shade of a wayside tree. He was very weary, and His disciples and friends who were with Him were anxious that He should rest quietly, and that no one should disturb Him.

But the village people, had heard that the great Teacher was there, and the joyful news quickly spread from house to house. The women hastily called the children together from their play. The little ones who could not walk they carried in their arms; even the tinest babies were not left behind. These mothers knew how good and kind and wonderful this great Teacher was. They had heard how the very touch of His hand healed the sick and gave sight to the blind, and they wanted Him to lay those loving hands upon their children's heads, for they knew that His touch would bring a blessing.

Very soon a crowd had gathered, and began to move towards the place where Jesus was. The barefooted children in their scanty little garments pattered along the dusty road; the women in their coarse red and blue robes, with bright handkerchiefs over their heads, followed behind, carrying the babies in their arms. All hurried towards the place where that tired figure could be seen resting at the wayside.

The disciples of the Master frowned as they saw the approaching crowd. This was too bad. If there were sick people to be healed or anxious men who wanted to hear the Master's wise words, it would have been more easily excused. But to disturb Him for nothing more than a crowd of children and babies was more than they could bear. The women should have known better than to allow their children to

come there and trouble the Master.

So the disciples hurried forward to check the little crowd and bring it to a standstill before it could disturb that quiet figure. The children were to go home at once, they said, and the mothers should be ashamed of themselves for being so selfish and thoughtless.

All the happy smiles began to fade upon the children's faces, and the mothers hung their heads with downcast looks when they heard the rebuking words. Slowly they turned to go back again without the blessing they had longed for. But in a moment their disappointment was turned into joy, for the Master, looking on, called to them Himself, and the sound of His dear voice could be heard by all.

"Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not," He said, "for of such is the kingdom of God."

He was displeased with His disciples for trying to send the little ones away. He wanted them, every one.

The children were not shy. They knew at once that it was the voice of some one who loved them, and they pressed happily forward as near to Him as possible, resting their little sunbrowned hands confidingly on His knee, or clutching at a fold of His robe. The mothers, too, came near, and humbly asked if He would lay His hand in blessing on their babies' heads. Each little dark or sunny head felt the touch of that gentle hand as the children gathered round His knees. And not only that, but He took the tiny babies in His own arms, just as the good shepherd carries his lambs.

It was when His life on earth was nearly ended, that once more a crowd of children gathered round the Master. But this time they did not come to ask anything of Him, but to

give Him all they had to offer—their song of praise and worship.

The day before, Jesus had ridden into Jerusalem amidst the welcoming shouts of the people. The men and women who went out to meet Him treated Him as if He were indeed a king. There was no procession of horsemen and chariots, no banners flying or trumpets blown, no royal robes or jewelled crown. The King, clothed in His peasant robes, rode upon a humble ass, and there seemed nothing to show that He was a great conquerer. But that day the people hailed Him as their earthly king. They took off their garments, and laid them on the road as a carpet for Him to ride over; they cut down palms and silvery olive branches, and strewed them in His way. The air rang with the sound of their voices as they shouted, "Hosanna: Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest."

The children amongst the crowd listened to that shout of praise, and it rang in their ears until they too joined in the song. And later on, when the King entered the Temple, they gathered round Him, a little group of children, and sang out again with all their hearts the hymn they had learned: "Hossanna: Hossanna in the highest."

The frowning, white-robed priests were very angry as they listened. They were really more angry with Jesus than with the children, for they hated Him, and it made them furious to hear the people call Him a King. They dared not say what was in their hearts to Him, but it was safer to blame the children who were making so much noise in the Holy Temple with their hymn of praise.

"Hearest Thou what these say?" demanded one of the

chief priests of Jesus, with an impatient gesture of his hands towards the singing children.

But Jesus loved to hear those childish voices. It made Him happy to receive their praise and love, and He would not bid them be silent. It was perfect praise, He told the priest who wished to have them silenced.

With the same kind look in His eyes as when He took those village babies in His arms, He listened now to the voices of the city children, ready always, then as now, to receive their love and worship.

The Story of the Miracles

HE first miracle Jesus performed was at a marriage feast at Cana of Galilee. He went there with His mother, Mary, and His disciples; it is pleasant to know that the Lord took part in a happy family meeting, and that the very first time He showed His Divine power was at a marriage feast, and for the purpose of increasing the happiness of the relations and friends who had met together. Perhaps the people who gave the feast were poor, or a greater number had come than were expected, for there was not wine enough for all. But Jesus soon supplied the want. There were six stone waterpots, and He told the servants to fill them with water, and take them to the ruler of the feast, who, when he poured out, found that the waterpots held better wine than that which had been drunk before. He was surprised at this, for he had always known the best wine to be served first. This miracle made these disciples who had followed Jesus believe in Him even more than before.

Soon Jesus showed that His power was to be chiefly used for the purpose of healing diseases, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and help to the helpless. The great love of our Saviour towards His people, and especially towards the poor, was shown by His going about doing good.

A terrible disease, leprosy, is very common in Eastern

countries, and many sufferers from it were in places Jesus visited. The poor creatures were outcasts; none could come near them or help them, from fear of catching the disease. Lepers were shunned by their fellow creatures, but Jesus showed mercy towards them, and healed them if they came to Him in faith.

When He came down from the mountain where He had preached the beautiful Sermon on the Mount, a poor leper came to Him and worshipped, saying, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." Jesus touched him, which no other would have dared to do, and directly the man was "clean," that is, the horrible disease was cured, and his flesh, only a moment before so hideous and corrupt, was healthy. Jesus bade him go quietly to the Temple and make the offering which the law of Moses commanded.

The Gospels describe the fearful sufferings of some who are said to have been "possessed of devils," or as we should now say, were mad. They suffered cruel pains and no help could be given them, so that generally they died miserably.

But as Jesus had cured the leper so, by His divine power, He was able to drive out the evil spirits; and although His enemies, who were jealous and afraid of Him, told the people that He drove out devils only by the power of the Devil, His disciples, who knew how pure and good He was, who had seen His wonderful works, and had heard the voice from heaven speaking of Him as the beloved Son of God, knew that he was the Christ, and that devils would fly from Him.

We are told that "They brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils, and He cast out the spirit with His word."

One dumb man over whom an evil spirit had power was brought to Him. The devil was cast out, and immediately the man was able to speak. This miracle was seen by thousands of persons, who wondered greatly, and said, "It was never so seen in Israel."

At Capernaum, a man with an evil spirit came into the synagogue while Jesus was there. The spirit, although it dared to bring the man into the presence of Jesus, was afraid of Him, and called out, "Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." We are told in another part of the Bible that "devils believe and tremble," and here was one who knew that Jesus was Christ, and was afraid. Jesus replied, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him." The evil spirit, in fear and spite, made the man whom it had possessed feel one terrible pain and then left him, and he cried out as it did so.

The people who saw this great miracle were all amazed. They had never before seen anything so wonderful as this power over evil spirits, and the fame of Jesus, we are told, was spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee. This was not the only spirit that was made to own His power, for we read in the third chapter of the Gospel of St. Mark that "unclean spirits, when they saw Him, fell down before Him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God."

One man was possessed by many devils. He did not live in a house nor wear clothes, but dwelt among the tombs. He had been bound with chains, but had power to break them and had fled from the city. He saw Jesus coming; and the

devils, shrieking at the sight of the Saviour, made the poor madman cry out, as the other spirit had cried out in the synagogue, "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God?" But they made him say, too, "I beseech Thee, torment me not," for he knew not that the Saviour would soon relieve him of his wicked tormentors. There was a herd of swine not far off, feeding on the mountains, and Jesus let the devils, when they left the man, enter into the swine, who immediately ran down the mountain into the sea and were drowned.

The people who saw the miracle ran with the news of it into the city, and into the country about, and many came out to see the man, whom they found "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind."

These wonderful works were talked about in all the land, and the people believed that a great prophet was among them. Jesus went about doing good, followed by a great number of those who lived in the towns and villages of Galilee.

"All they that had any sick with divers diseases (illness of many kinds) brought them unto Him, and He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them." Among others was the mother of the wife of Peter, one of His first disciples. She was ill with fever; but directly Jesus touched her hand she was cured, rose from her couch, and went about her work as usual.

Some of the Roman soldiers even—for at that time all the land was under the rule of the powerful Romans—believed in His power; and at Capernaum, a centurion (that is, a captain over a hundred men), whose servant was sick of the palsy, came to Jesus and asked Him to heal his servant.

Healing the Sick

The centurion said he was not worthy to receive Him in his house; but he knew that His power was so great that if Jesus only said the word the servant would be cured.

Jesus told those around that the centurion's faith was greater than that of any of the children of Israel, and that many besides the Jews, who thought that they only were chosen to be the people of God, should enter the kingdom of heaven. He said to the centurion, "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." At the same moment, the servant was cured, although Jesus did not see or touch him.

A woman who had been ill for twelve years, and whom the physicians of the place had been unable to cure, although she had spent all her money in medicine, saw Jesus and the crowd following Him. She believed that He could heal her, and hopeless, perhaps, of being able to speak to Him in the crowd, she put out her hand and touched the border of His robe. She felt sure that even that action would give her relief.

Jesus felt the touch and, turning round, asked, "Who touched me?" The poor woman, afraid that He might be angry, fell down before Him, and told Him why she had touched His garment. Jesus, full of merciful kindness, said, "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole (healed thee of thy disease); go in peace." We may see by this that the cure was a reward of the woman's faith; and in other parts of the Scriptures we are taught that if we ask God in faith for any good thing it will be given us.

But the miracles wrought that day were not ended when the daughter of Jairus was raised to life. Among the crowd which waited at the doors, filled with wonder at the great

things which had been done, were two blind men. Although they could not see Jesus they knew by the words of those about when He left the house, and they followed, crying out, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." We may see by this that, although the priests and Pharisees would not own that Jesus was the Christ who had been promised, the people believed that He was the Messiah, who the prophets had said would be of the line of David.

Jesus heard the blind men and asked, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" They said, "Yea, Lord." Then He touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith be it unto you." So that, if they had not believed in His power, and had only tried to deceive Him, their prayer would not have been granted. But they did believe, and, having asked in faith, their eyes were opened.

Other blind men had sight given them by Jesus. At Bethsaida, a blind man was led to Him, and Jesus, having touched him, asked what he saw. He answered, "I see men as trees, walking." The gift of sight was at first so strange to him that he was confused and could not tell the difference in size between men and trees. But Jesus touched him again, and then he saw clearly. There were many blind beggars about, and one of them, Bartimæus, sat by the side of the road near Jericho. He heard that Jesus was passing, and called out loudly, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Some of the people bade him be quiet, but he would not and only cried out louder. Jesus commanded that he should be brought to Him, and then those about began to comfort the poor man, and helped him to reach the Lord, who asked, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" Bartimæus,

full of faith, answered, "Lord, that I might receive my sight."

Like the other blind man whose faith had obtained the Lord's blessing, he immediately received his sight, and then he followed Jesus, glorifying God, "and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God."

Jesus did not always complete the cure at once. Sometimes He required some act of obedience as a proof of faith. One man who had been blind from his birth was brought to Him. He anointed the eyes of the man with clay, and then told him to wash in the pool of Siloam. The man did so, and came away seeing. Many of the people in the place who had known the blind beggar, and that he had been blind all his life, could hardly believe that it was indeed he who now could see so well; and they took him to some of the Pharisees to be questioned. They sent for the parents of the blind man to say whether this was really their son, and when they said he was, they asked questions as to what Jesus had done to the eyes. The man told them, and then the Pharisees said Jesus could have had nothing to do with the cure, for as it was the Sabbath-day when He put the clay on the eyes, He could only be a man and a sinner, for no prophets would perform miracles on the Sabbath-day. The Pharisees had quite a wrong idea of the Sabbath. Jesus taught us its true use, that it is a day not only for worship but for all good works.

The Pharisees told the man that he must give God the praise for restoring him to sight, for what Jesus did could have had nothing to do with it, for they knew that He was only a common man and a sinner, and it was impossible

that a man could give sight to one that had been always blind. But the man very wisely answered, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." That great fact was enough for him, and, gaining courage, he went on to say, "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." The Pharisees were very angry at this; they hated Jesus, and, telling the man that he was wicked altogether, and asking what he meant by pretending to teach them, cast him out of the Temple. Jesus, when He heard what had happened, went and asked him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" He answered, "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" And Jesus said unto him, "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee." Then the poor man who had been blind, and to whom sight had been given, had the eyes of his soul also opened, and knew that he was speaking to the Lord Christ. He said, "Lord, I believe," and worshipped Him.

Besides the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, Jesus restored to life the only son of a poor widow in a city called Nain. He was on His way to that place when He met the dead body being carried to buried; the mother was following, weeping, and the Divine heart of Jesus was moved with pity. He told her not to weep, and, commanding the bearers to stop, said as He had said to the little daughter of Jairus, "Arise." The young man at once sat up and began to speak. If we can think how we should feel if we saw one who was dead return to life and speak again, we may be able to understand what the crowd which had gathered at the gate of the city of Nain must have felt. We read that "There came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying that a great

prophet is risen up among us, and that God hath visited His people."

Jesus always spoke of God's love to us as that of a father for a child. He mourned with those who mourned for their children, and we have seen what compassion He had for fathers and mothers whose little ones were dead or ill. This was shown, too, in the case of a woman, spoken of as a woman of Canaan and a Greek, one who was not of the Jewish race, and who was therefore despised by the strict Jews as one of the Gentiles who had no part in the promises of God. She came to Jesus saying that her young daughter was possessed by an evil spirit. To try her faith, Jesus reminded her of what the Jews thought of people of her race and said, "Let the children first be filled; for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto the dogs." She, Gentile as she was, knew better how merciful and loving is God, and answered meekly and trustingly, "Yes, Lord; yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." Jesus rewarded her faith by saying, "For this saying go thy way, the devil is gone out of thy daughter." Full of joy, the woman went home, and there she found it was as Jesus had said. Her daughter, no more tormented by the evil spirit, was lying quietly on her bed, well and happy.

At Decapolis He gave hearing and the power of speech to a man who was deaf and who could not speak plainly; and He restored the withered hand of a man who came to Him in the synagogue at Capernaum. This He did on the Sabbath-day, on which day also He performed many other miracles. We have read that the priests tried to prove from this that He was a sinner, and could not be the Lord; but

they could not answer Him when He asked, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath-day, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?" It was on the Sabbath that He cured a woman who for eighteen years had been bent together, so that she could not stand up. "He laid his hands on her; and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God."

Most of the miracles of Christ were performed in the presence of multitudes who could prove their truth. His fame spread everywhere, and even priests, scribes, and Parisees came from great distances to see His works, although they refused to believe in Him.

Once He was teaching in a house which was crowded with listeners, among them Pharisees and doctors of the law.

There came to the door two men, who had carried an old man to see the Healer. But the crowd was so great, it was impossible to get in, and their poor old friend could not even sit up, nor raise his head.

They cheered the old man, "We will find some way," they said, and lifting him up again, on his mattress, they climbed the stairs to the flat roof. They then lifted out tiles, until they had made a hole, through which they could carefully lower their friend, until he lay at Jesus' feet.

Jesus did not cure him at first. He said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee."

The Pharisees were angry at this, and called out that none but God could forgive sins.

But Jesus asked them whether it was not as easy to forgive sins, as to say, Rise up and walk. But that they might know He had power on earth to forgive sins, He said to the man who was lying helpless at his feet, "Arise! Take up thy

bed and go thy way into thine house!"

The man at once rose up well and strong, picked up the bed on which he had been lying, and walked joyfully to his home.

It is not to be wondered at, that all who saw the miracle were amazed and glorified God.

Near the sheep-market was a pool known as Bethesda. It was believed that at certain times the waters of this pool were "troubled," or moved violently, by an angel, and that whoever could first enter the water at this time would be cured of any disease. Many poor creatures were always there, waiting for the troubled appearance of the waters, and their friends hastened to plunge them in. But one man who had been diseased for thirty-eight years had been brought there on his bed, but had no friend with him, so that when he saw the water move, he could not get to it in time, for said he to Jesus, "While I am coming, another steppeth down before me." Jesus now showed His power, for He said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk," and immediately the man was cured. This miracle also was performed on the Sabbath-day.

The Young Fisher Whom Jesus Loved

IN THE part of Palestine where the Lord Jesus grew up there is a lake high up among the mountains—a lake so large that it is called the Sea of Galilee. Big hills slope down to its beaches, and the sand among the pebbles of the shore is almost entirely made of tiny crushed shells. These shells sparkle in the sunshine, and the little waves of the sea sparkle too. The mountain-sides are thick with flowers, and tall palm trees, with plumy tops, fringe the lanes.

One day, on the beach, a young fisherman sat mending his father's nets. Near him were his father, who was called Zebedee, and his elder brother, who was called James, and, a little way out from the shore, in a big boat, were two other fishermen called Simon Peter and Andrew, who were throwing a net into the sea.

It was very calm and still, and John, the young fisherman, was very busy. But suddenly the hush was broken. Footsteps came along the shingle, and a strong clear man's voice echoed out over the water:

"Simon Peter and Andrew, come! Follow Me!"

Everybody on the beach looked up, John among them; and he saw that Christ was standing just at the edge of the waves.

The miraculous draught of Fishes

Christ was grown up now, and John thought he had never seen a man so strong and kind and beautiful. The fisher-lad sat, his hands still holding the net, gazing earnestly, as Simon Peter and Andrew without a word, pushed their boat nearer to the land, climbed out and joined the Lord Jesus. Then Christ passed on, and came to where the young fisher sat.

And when He saw the lad, He loved him, perhaps because, as we know, John was so much younger than the other disciples. He held out one hand to the youth, and one to James, the elder brother. And He smiled and said, again: "Follow Me! You two also —follow Me!" James got up from the shingle, and John did likewise, and they joined the Lord Jesus and became His disciples.

They went about with Him, nearly always, after that, to a great many villages, and to big cities, some on the coast where the large merchant-vessels lay in the harbours, and some in the valleys where the corn grew all around. John liked the coast-towns best, because of the ships that he saw there. But always they came back to the Sea of Galilee, where John's father and mother lived. The Lord Jesus lived there Himself, you see, at that time, at the small rocky town called Capernaum. And very often He went out fishing with the fishermen, or travelled in their boats from one side of the great lake to the other.

They all knew that He was not like other men, just as He had not been quite like other children. They could tell, by the wonderful things He did, that God's power was in Him and about Him; and John loved Him more and more every day of his life.

Well, one day, Christ had been doing kind and marvellous things among the people on the shores of the lake, and, when evening came, He was tired, and went up to the top of one of the hills to be by Himself and pray to His Father, under the blue sky. He told the fishermen not to wait for Him, but to spread their sails, and go home across the lake without Him. So they started off, just as the sun was setting,

though, most likely, they knew that the moon would soon rise; and for a little while they sailed calmly and softly on towards Capernaum.

Then, just as happens on our lakes sometimes, suddenly the wind changed. John heard the new sound in the breeze, and looked up at the sails in dismay. Quickly all the fishermen sprang to the ropes and reefed the big sails, lest the storm should upset the boat. They were only just in time. Down swept the wind, shrieking and whistling, from the hill-tops, and struck the water so that it began to last itself into big white waves. And these great waves rolled against the side of the boat, and the fishermen were obliged to take their oars and turn the bows of the boat into the wind lest they should be upset. The moon rose over the hills, all big and bright, except when it was hidden by the dark racing clouds which tore over the sky. John must have trembled as he helped to row the boat, for he would be very much afraid.

One great cloud hid the face of the moon for several minutes, and there was nothing to be seen around the boat but dark shadowy caves of green water and white mists of foam. Then all at once the moon shone out again; and, walking on the tossing sea, down a path of silvery glory, the fishermen saw the figure of Jesus coming towards them from the land.

John caught his breath in silence. Then he heard exclamations from the other fishermen at their oars as they bent their backs against the wind; and one cried out under his breath that he saw a Spirit. Another cried out, also under his breath, that it was the Lord Jesus. And Simon Peter called out, louder than any of them, to that wonderful, beautiful figure in moonlight on the sea:

"Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water!"

The answer rang out through the wind—"Come!"

And Simon Peter sprang out of the boat into the sea. Then his courage and his faith failed him, and, with a loud cry, he began to sink; and John must have shut his eyes for a moment in fear.

Then, all at once, the wind fell. When John looked up again, he could see Jesus holding Simon Peter by His side, as both stood upon the waves. And together, in the sudden calm, the Master and His disciple stepped into the ship. But Jesus, as he supported Simon Peter, had rebuked him, very gently and softly, saying, "Oh, thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

The Little Boy's Wonderful Basket

YOU remember that, on the afternoon before Christ walked on the sea to join the fishermen in their boat, He had been doing many wonderful things, and had also been teaching the people about God, and about God's love for the world. He had been talking to them on the hills round about the Sea of Galilee, but at the other end from where Capernaum stood. He had been making sick people well, and sorrowful people happy, and, while He was telling them how to be good and to obey God, more and more people came up the hill-side paths to listen.

John, the fisher-lad, was there, of course, keeping as near to the Master as he could. And John watched the crowds climbing the mountain-side from all parts—men and women, and children, toiling up in the hot sunshine. Then the fisher-lad saw ships crossing the lake, bringing more people; and even travellers on the high road through the hills, when they saw the crowd in the distance, stopped their camels and mules, and came up to see what was happening.

The Lord Jesus stood a little apart, among the rocks, where ferns and creepers grew. His voice, as He spoke, rang out clearly, like a trumpet; for, in Palestine, you can hear every little sound for many hundreds of yards. And the people kept so quiet that, as well as that strong and beautiful

voice, your ears might have caught the tinkle of the water-courses down the hill-side, and the rippling of the lake on the shore below.

At last even the Master was tired, and He sat down, leaning back against the rocks with His eyes shut. But the people who had been listening did not go away. A few of them had brought something to eat—dates, and little cakes, and honey. And, on the edge of the crowd, some boys, who had come up from the villages on the plain, would be selling food out of baskets; just as you may often see boys hawking cakes and nuts at country fairs to-day.

But perhaps there were not many of these lads; their baskets would soon be emptied, and they would go away. At last the Lord Jesus raised Himself from the rocks, and looked at the great crowd of people; and He turned to one of His disciples who was called Philip, and asked:

"Where can we buy bread for all these tired, hungry people? They must want something to eat!"

Philip shook his head. And the other disciples looked round, first at the people, and then at the green, soft hills.

"This is a place without houses or markets," they said. "Send the people away to the distant villages for food and shelter."

"No," the Lord Jesus said gently, "we cannot do that. We must find something for all of them to eat."

The disciples could not see any way of feeding the people, but at that moment a boy came walking along the mountain-path. He had a basket in his hands, and he was carrying this basket very carefully, for it held five barley loaves and two small fishes. We are not told in the Bible what he

meant to do with them. Perhaps he thought he could sell them—perhaps they were his own simple supper. By-and-bye he saw the crowds of people on the slope of the hill, standing in rows, one above the other and looking like great groups of flowers, in their red and blue and green garments. He went straight up to Andrew, who was standing nearest, and thrust the precious basket into the fisherman's hands.

I think that, when the little boy saw the hungry people, and heard Christ's disciples say that there was no way in which they could be fed, he must have wanted to help, though what he could give was so little. He must have been proud and happy, too, when Andrew took the basket. But the fisherman smiled and shook his head when he looked inside, and saw the little loaves and small broiled fishes. However, the loving eyes of the Master looked on the child with a promise in them.

"What has the child got?" asked the Lord Jesus.

They showed Him the basket, and said that what was in it was no good among so many people. And the little boy stood by, perhaps feeling very sorry that he had not more, But the Master held up His hand.

"Tell the people to sit down," He said; "and give the basket to Me!"

So the people sat on the grassy hillside, and the Lord Jesus stood up, took the basket, and, lifting His face towards the sky, He thanked God for the food, and blessed it; and then He began to give out the bread and fish from the basket. He went on, and on, and on; but the food did not come to an end. The disciples kept taking it to the people, and coming back for more, and the little boy watched in

amazement and joy. At last everybody had had enough, and still the Lord held the basket in His hands.

"Now," He said, "gather up the pieces that the people have let fall, so that nothing may be wasted."

And, when all the fragments had been picked up, there were twelve baskets full of broken food.

Then the Lord Jesus must have turned with the sweetest smile, and have given the little boy his own small basket back again. And the child, as he went home, in the sunset light, must have been filled with wonder at the things he had seen.

Parables, Or Stories

EVERY one loves stories, and Jesus, as He taught the people, knew this. So He often wrapped up some special lesson in the form of a story, and hid the beautiful truth deep in its heart. Only those who looked carefully and listened with their hearts as well as their ears, found the hidden meaning of these stories, or parables, as they are called.

It was not the learned and the rich who crowded round most eagerly to listen to the Master's stories. It was to the poor, weary, toilworn people that Jesus loved to speak His comforting words. Many of these people were not at all good; but that was just the reason why they wanted help, and needed to be taught to try and live a whiter, purer life.

It was once when He was among a crowd of these poor, sinful people, who were listening with eager, wistful faces to His words of kindness and hope, that He told the story of the Prodigal Son.

"There was once a father who had two sons," the story began. The elder was hard-working, steady, and obedient, one who never gave his father any trouble, but always did his duty. But the younger was a headstrong, difficult boy, idle and self-willed, fond of pleasure, and determined to have his own way. He did not want to work and earn his own living; he thought he had a perfect right to the money which

belonged to his father.

"Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me," he said one day. He could not even wait until at his father's death he would receive his share. No, he wanted it now, and he did not stop to think how such a request must hurt his kind father.

The father knew that it was no use telling him how foolish and wrong he was. The headstrong, selfish boy must learn that lesson another way. So he quietly divided all his money, and gave the younger son his share.

There was nothing now to keep the boy at home. His home and his father meant nothing to him compared to pleasure and adventure. So he set off on a long journey to a far-away country, carrying his money with him.

At first everything was as delightful as he could wish. He had nothing to do from morning till night but to plan how he could best enjoy himself. The companions who gathered round him were ready to flatter him and help him spend his money. The flowery path of pleasure was very pleasant to tread.

But by-and-by everything changed. The gay banquets, the riot of delights, came to an end. All his money was spent. All his friends, as they had called themselves, left him. They had no longer any use for him when he had nothing more to give them.

There he was, all alone, a stranger in a strange land. And how was he to live? He had never learned to do skilled work, and it was not easy to begin to earn his living now. There was a great famine, too, in the land, and food was very scarce. Day by day things grew darker and darker. And at last he

The Prodigal Son

was so hungry and so poor that he was thankful to hire himself out as a swineherd, and go into the fields to feed pigs. The wages for that kind of work were very small, not nearly enough to buy him his daily bread; and often as he watched the pigs grubbing amongst their food, he was hungry enough to envy them, and to wish he could have a share of the husks upon which they fed.

Thoughts of home now began to haunt him. How kind and patient his father had been. What a comfortable, happy place home seemed, looking back upon it now. The very servants there were better fed, and not so hard-worked as he was.

And then suddenly one day, when these thoughts were crowding in upon him, he saw quite clearly, as if by a sudden flash of light, how wrong and foolish he had been from the very beginning. Out there in the fields, while the pigs grunted and fed around him, and there was no one to listen to him, he cried out loud the new thought that had come into his mind: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."

It was not an easy thing to go humbly back, to say he had been wrong and ask for forgiveness, but it was the only way. And day by day the longing to see his father, and to tell him how sorry he was, grew stronger and stronger. He was ready to suffer any punishment, if only he might live at home again.

It was a long journey, but at last the poor, hungry ragged boy came within sight of home. It was time now to take his courage in both hands, and go to meet his father.

But while he was still a long way off his father saw him. Perhaps he had been watching for that return, feeling sure that some day his boy would come back. He did not wait now for him to come humbly to the door. His heart was so full of pity and love that he ran out to meet him, and before the boy could say a word his father's arms were round him, and he felt his father's kiss of forgiveness and welcome.

"Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son," the words came from the boy's trembling lips. He was more ashamed now than ever. But the father did not even talk of forgiveness; that was too well understood.

"Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him," he commanded the servants; "and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

So there was feasting and rejoicing, and only the elder brother was vexed and angry. He did not like to see his wasteful, undutiful brother welcomed back into the home; he thought he deserved to be punished, and that the reward should have been given to the one who had stayed at home and done his duty.

Looking round upon the listening faces, Jesus, as He finished the story, saw many of His Father's poor, sinful children, who had been just as wicked and foolish as that younger son. He longed for them to know that their Father in Heaven was as pitiful and ready to forgive them as was the father in the story, even though the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees would have them punished as they deserved.

Those clever lawyers and priests who so carefully kept the law needed their lesson too, and it was to one of these that He told the story of the Good Samaritan, that they might learn the lesson of love to their neighbour.

There was a man one day, the story began, who set out to travel along the road which led from Jerusalem to Jericho. It was a wild road, where robbers often lurked, ready to swoop down on any unsuspecting traveller if he happened to be alone and unarmed.

This man was going along the road, never dreaming of danger, when suddenly the robbers sprang out from behind the rocks and fell upon him. They took away from him everything he possessed, even his clothes, and hurt him so sorely that, when they went off and left him by the roadside, he was half dead.

Presently there came along the road one of the priests from the beautiful Temple, and he saw the poor wounded traveller lying there. But it was none of his business, he thought; he did not know the man or care about him. So he carefully drew aside, and passed by on the opposite side of the road. Then another man came along, one who also called himself a servant of God. He went close to the poor traveller and looked at him thoughtfully, but did not touch him or put out a hand to help him. It was not his duty to attend to wounded travellers, and no one could expect him to do more than his duty, and so he passed on.

The poor man would certainly have been left there to die if another traveller had not found him later on. This traveller was not a Jew, but a Samaritan and quite a stranger. He was not specially learned or anxious to do his duty. He never

thought of duty as he looked at the poor stripped and wounded figure so sorely in need of help. Very gently he raised the traveller's head and bound up his gaping wounds; and then, lifting him upon the ass, he led him carefully along that dangerous road until an inn was reached. There the poor man was carefully tended; and as all his money had been stolen, the good, kind stranger paid the innkeeper himself before he left.

"Now," said Jesus to the learned man who had listened to the story, "which of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?"

"He that showed mercy on him," came the answer at once. The lawyer was quick to see the lesson Jesus would teach, but that was no use unless he learnt to practice the mercy He spoke of.

And so, "Go and do thou likewise," was the warning that fell from the Master's lips, as the story ended.

The disciples of Jesus were nearly all poor men who had not much learning, and they "came to Him as little children," and were taught as little children are. Jesus was able to show them by means of parables referring to things they saw around how loving and merciful the Father was; how necessary it was that their faith should be true and not change; how they were likely to commit sin if they were not watchful; how they should love and help one another, and many other beautiful lessons. The fig-trees, of which there were so many in the country about Jerusalem; the vineyards in which the country people worked; the wheat which grew in the fields; the sheep which sometimes strayed away, and the shepherd who sought and found them; the wretched beg-

gars in the streets of the city; the wedding feasts which the rich people made—all these the Lord spoke about, and taught wonderful lessons by them. And not only the disciples, but Christians ever since that time, have learned from these beautiful parables to love God with all their heart and soul, and their neighbors as themselves, and to do unto others as they would wish others to do to them.

By another interesting parable, Jesus cautioned His disciples against forgetting what He told them. Of course they had often seen the country people sowing seed, and our Lord reminded them that some seeds fall by the wayside, and are eaten up by the birds; others fall upon stony places, and, although they may at first spring up, the plant soon withers away because there is no depth of earth to nourish it; other seeds fall among thorns, which hinder their growth; while others fall into good ground, take root well, and the wheat comes up strong and healthy, so that there is a large yield of grain. At first the disciples could not see the meaning of this lesson; so Jesus explained that, with those who heard the Gospel and did not take pains to understand it, the seed had fallen by the wayside; it might be said to be sown in stony places when the hearer at first received the Gospel joyfully, but would not follow its teaching if a time of trouble came, allowing his faith, at first promising well, to wither. If the hearer thought too much of the things of this world and gave his heart to riches, then the cares which he felt choked the word, as the thorns choked the plant. But when the hearer of the Gospel understood it, and made it the guide of his life, and loved it, then the seed had fallen on good ground, and brought forth fruit.

The Prodigal Son

Jesus told another parable about sowing wheat. He said a man sowed good seed, but in the night an enemy came and sowed tares, or weeds, among the wheat, so that the good grain and the weeds grew up together. The farmer's servants asked him if they should pull up the tares; but he said, "Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them; let them both grow together until the harvest." Then, he said, the reapers could gather the tares into a bundle and burn them, and put the wheat into the barn. The disciples saw the meaning of the parable when the Lord explained that the farmer meant Himself; that the seeds of wheat were those who believed on Him; the enemy was the devil, and the tares were the wicked men whom he led away. Good men and bad men would be together in the world; but at the end "the righteous should shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father."

In several parables our Saviour described the Kingdom of Heaven, and the influence of the Gospel in leading men to God. It was like a fisher's net which drew up fish of every kind. The fishermen took care of the good and wholesome fish, and cast away the bad; so, at the end of the world, the angels would separate good from wicked men. To show how the Gospel, which He then preached to only a few, should come to be preached all over the world, He likened it to a grain of very small seed which grew to be a very large tree, in the branches of which the birds of the air lodged. And to teach His disciples that the Word of God was more precious than all the wealth of the world, and that all who follow Him should be ready to give all they have to possess its blessing, He compared it to a treasure hid in a field, to

buy which a man would sell all that he had, and to a pearl of such value, that a merchant would give all his money to purchase it.

The Little Girl Who Came Back

YOU remember how, in an earlier story, you were told that the Lord Jesus was living at Capernaum. He had come from Nazareth, because He wanted to teach the people. Capernaum was quite a small town, with a great many Romans and Greeks in it, and not very many Jews. It had a Roman fort, with little towers set on the top; and you could see these towers from a long way off. Most of the rich people were either Roman or Greek, and had nice houses. But the Jews there were generally poor—so poor that the Romans had built their synagogue for them. They all lived in friendship together.

There were, however, a few Jews who were well-off at Capernaum, and among them was the father of a little girl who loved his daughter more than anything else in the world. He was called Jairus. That is a Greek name, which he liked better than the Hebrew name of Jair. He loved everything that was wise and everything that was beautiful, and he tried to bring up his little girl to love them, too. The country in which they lived is still, in spring-time, covered with the fairest wild flowers in the world. All over the plains near her home the little girl would see blue and yellow lupins, azure borage, anemones in red and blue and purple, pink "ragged robins," and big daisies in white and gold. The

The Little Girl who came back

black and white storks would stand solemnly among the flowers; and the king-fishers, like living emeralds and sapphires, would flash across a little stream that flowed into the shining Sea of Galilee. Here, too, would be hoopoes, with beautiful crested heads and golden-buff necks, but, oh! so untidy in their little holes in the trees; pretty partridges, calling to their downy chicks among the rocks; and every now and then, a wonderful rare fishing-eagle, hanging with beating wings over the nothern end of the lake, and then falling like a stone into the water, sending up a shower of sparkling spray in its mighty dive after the fish brought down by the river Jordan.

The town of Capernaum, itself, stood where four great roads met—roads down which travelling parties of people, with mules and camels, were always coming and going. There was a big pool, rather like what we call a reservoir, blue and deep, just where these four roads met; and here the merchants bought and sold all kinds of things—ivory, and silk, and beautiful ornaments from a city called Damascus. There was another narrower road there, too, which led right down on to the beach of the Sea of Galilee, and passed through the houses of a fishing-village called Bethsaida, which was built almost on the shore itself, while Capernaum stood higher on the hill. It was at Bethsaida that the young fisherman John lived, with his father Zebedee, and his brother James. Andrew and Simon Peter had their homes there, too, and so had Philip, another disciple.

Now Jairus's daughter, as she walked about with her father and mother, or perhaps with her Greek nurse, must often have seen the Lord Jesus. She must have met Him in

the lanes where the palm-trees and cactus grew, and have seen Him, seated a little way from the shore, in Simon Peter's fishing-boat, teaching the people who thronged right down to the water's edge to hear Him. In the cool evenings she and her father would come across the Master walking quietly among the dewy flowers, wearing his long square coat of lambs' wool, with its white fringes at the corners, and its hem of blue all round. By this coat everybody knew Him for a Jew. For, at this time, the people of Samaria were quite distinct from the Jewish Israelites. Jairus would wear the same sort of coat himself; and, also, two tiny leather ornaments bound, one with a strap to his forehead, and the other to the back of his right hand. They were called "phylacteries," and they held two very small rolls of parchment, on which were written the laws that the Hebrews had to obey. Jairus would very often wear his, for he was an important person at Capernaum, and a ruler of the Synagogue. But perhaps the Lord Jesus did not wear the little leather ornaments, for He lived the life of a simple carpenter, or of a fisherman, among the poor people of Bethsaida.

Jairus's daughter must have heard her father and mother talk a great deal about Christ. You know that, although in Jerusalem Herod lived a wicked life, and many of his courtiers did the same, yet in other places in Palestine there were a number of Israelites who believed that Jehovah was going to show Himself once again to the Hebrews—not in the thunder of a mountain, or the soft breezes of a dusky starlit garden, or even in the Holy of Holies in the big Temple, from which the Ark of the Promise had been lost. They believed that, this time, a wonderful and gracious man would

come forth to lead them. And they were beginning to feel sure that this man was with them now, moving among the flowers and birds of Galilee, in the person of the great teacher from Nazareth, who was called Jesus, the Christ.

The little girl would see John the Baptist, too, in his rough striped smock and leather girdle. She would hear about the ford called the Upper Bethabara, where the oleanders grow, and where John had baptized Christ. And she would hear the people say that a dove, made all of golden light, had floated down with widespread wings from the sky, and hung for a moment above the brows of Jesus before it flew away. And perhaps she would go herself, breathless and wondering, to some ford of the river, and see her parents submit to this strange ceremony performed by the strong and lion-like baptizer from the high hills—a priest of a new order of holiness. The story of the Angel Gabriel appearing to Zacharias in the Temple, and of the angels on the plains of Bethlehem, must have been told in her hearing; while her father would read aloud the prophecies from the long parchment rolls that were his library of books, and quote the old poet's beautiful words:

"The branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious."

"A man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind and as a refuge from the tempest."

"The Day-spring from on high hath visited us."

"Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they rise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust! For thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

"His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

It was for a Man such as this that the faithful Israelites waited so patiently, and of whom Jairus's little girl would hear so much. She must often have gone to bed with these words ringing in her ears—"Wonderful, Counsellor, the Prince of Peace." On Sabbath days she would help her mother make her father ready for the Synagogue, which was, you know, the place where the Jews held their Sabbath services, and where she, herself, was taught on week days. Jairus always put on a special blue and white scarf for this service. But the little girl would most likely wear a simple frock like the Greek and Roman children with whom she played.

She would go to the Synagogue, and there she would sing the very psalms that people sing in our services to-day! How much they would mean to her! When the sweet words rang out: "In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion!" she would think of the Temple of Jerusalem, not many miles away, to which her father and mother journeyed on high feast-days. And, at the Synagogue, she would see the Lord Jesus, with John, and James, and Zebedee; and labourers and harvesters from the country round. The Synagogue was very crowded in those days. Everybody pressed to see and hear this new prophet, who made deaf people to hear, and blind people to see, and even raised dead people to life again.

The Synagogue was a beautiful white building, rather like the buildings of Greece, with a long flight of marble steps. It must have looked very lovely among the houses around, which were made of a kind of dark stone. Jairus's

daughter may have heard Christ preach His first sermon in Galilee there; and it was not like any sermon that had ever been preached in the Synagogue before. On the same day, a man, who, like Saul of old, was tormented by thoughts and dreams of evil, began to shout in the middle of the service, calling to Christ, this Holy One of God, to go away and leave the Evil Ones alone. But the Lord Jesus just turned His calm eyes to the place from where the shoutings came, and spoke gravely to the Evil Ones who had taken up their home in the poor man's mind. And the Spirits of Darkness fled; the man, healed and penitent, bent his head in worshipping joy before Christ, the Light of the World.

All these things the little daughter of Jairus probably saw and heard. More and more eagerly she would begin to question her father, and to watch in the lanes, and on the sandy shore, for the passings of the Lord Jesus. And she learnt to love Him, in her childish way, very deeply indeed. She loved His tender eyes, His sweet smile, and His beautiful, strong, kind voice. She was sorry when He went away to teach in other villages, and always so glad when He came back again.

Then, one hot day, when the Lord Jesus was some miles away, in a country that belonged to people who were called the Gadarenes, the little daughter of Jairus fell sick. She lay, tossing and moaning, on her small bed, and her father and mother were in deep grief about her. Day after day she grew worse, and at last there seemed to be no hope—everybody thought she would die. Jairus prayed, with all his heart, for the return of the Lord Jesus, because he felt sure that only the Master could save her.

The little girl was at her very worst when her father went out one day, and saw, coming across the lake, the sail of the ship that was bringing back the Master to the shore under the city of Capernaum.

Everybody flocked to meet Him as He stepped on to the pebbly beach. But Jairus was first of all. When he saw the Lord Jesus he fell at His feet, and begged Him to come to his home and save his little daughter.

The Master set off up the road, with a great crowd of people following. As they reached the house a sobbing servant came out and said to Jairus:

"Thy daughter is dead! Trouble not the Master."

Jairus gave a low cry, but the Lord Jesus turned to him and spoke with grave tenderness.

"Fear not!" He said. "Only believe, and she shall be made well again."

Then He entered the house, and went up into the room where the little, dead child was laid. People were sobbing noisily about her; but the Master held up His hand and bade them hush.

"Weep not," He said, "weep not! She is not dead, but sleepeth."

But nobody believed Him, for they felt sure she was dead. They could not understand, you see, that the Master knew her spirit was still alive, and that He had the power to call it back again to the world that it had left.

Then the Master sent all away, all but the child's father and mother, and Peter, and James and John. While these five stood a little way off, He went up, quite alone, to the bedside, and took the little girl's cold, still hand.

"Little girl!" He said, in a sweet low voice, bending over her with, oh! such a kind loving face, "Little girl! Arise!"

A thrill ran through the quiet small body, the innocent eyes opened, and the spirit of Jairus's daughter came back. She sat up, and looked, with all her old childish love, into the face of the Lord Jesus.

He put His arm round her, and told her father and mother to come and kiss her again on her warm, living, little mouth. He said they were to give her something to eat, for she would soon be quite well. Then He went quietly from the house, telling them that they need not talk to anybody about the wonderful thing He had done.

But Jairus's daughter would often wake in the night to think of him, and whisper to herself the words—"His Name shall be called Wonderful."

How much—how very much—those words of Isaiah must have meant to her now!

The Promise

OON there came such a strange, sad day for the people, and, above all, for the children of Jerusalem.

You know that those who followed, and almost worshipped, the Lord Jesus loved to call Him their King and the son of David. The priests now at Jerusalem were not men who wanted to keep the glory of the Temple pure for the worship of Jehovah. They sought office, and the riches of office, for themselves alone; and they always took care not to displease the Romans, who governed them in those days. So they said to each other:

"If we go to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor, and tell him that there is a carpenter from Nazareth calling Himself the King of the Jews, and that the people are massing to Him, and will very likely rise in rebellion under His leading, then Pilate will have Him put to death!"

So the priests began to look everywhere in Jerusalem for the Lord Jesus. Guided by one of His own friends and disciples, the traitor Judas Iscariot, they found Him in a garden through which a little river flowed. Their soldiers took Him prisoner, and led Him before Pontius Pilate, who was staying in Jerusalem at the time of the great Passover feast.

Many people had come to Jerusalem for the Passover, and among them would certainly be Jairus and his wife. I

think it is most likely that they would bring with them their little daughter who had been restored to life. She must have been doubly precious to them now. She could never again have been quite like other children, for she had glanced inside the gates of Paradise.

She and her father and mother would stay with some of their rich friends in the Holy City, for there were then no inns, as we understand them, in Jerusalem. But very few of the rich people followed and loved the Master; and nobody was powerful enough to save Him when the High Priests told Pontius Pilate that He was going to lead a rebellion against the Roman rule.

Among the very few who did really know what that Kingdom was of which Christ spoke so lovingly, as He trod among the flowers, or through the quiet woods, was a rich Jew called Joseph of Arimathea. He had a house with a beautiful garden round it. It is very likely, though we really do not know, that Jairus and his wife, with their little girl. would spend the Passover at Jerusalem as the guests of Joseph of Arimathea.

When you are older, and can really understand the story of the way in which Christ was put to death, I want you to think of one child who perhaps knew more about it than anybody else in the world—the little girl who had come back to her father and mother from Paradise, and who may, on that sad day when the Holy Jesus was nailed to a Cross to die, have been wandering quietly by herself in the beautiful garden of Joseph of Arimathea.

It was such a lovely time of the year, and the fullness of Spring must have been in the garden, all sweet and blue with

iris below, and pale and pink with almond blossom above. As the child walked there, she must have heard the footsteps of a sad-hearted crowd outside. Then, perhaps, another child would run quickly into the garden, and, all bewildered, would tell her that men were killing the Master—putting nails into His hands and feet, and setting Him upon a high Cross, so that He must die. And I can think that Jairus's little daughter would hold out her own small hands and look at them thoughtfully.

"There were no nails through my hands, you know," she might say, "but everybody thought I was dead, did they not?"

And the other child would answer wonderingly, "Yes."

Then it would begin to grow dim in the garden, for there was a great darkness over Jerusalem when the Master died. But to Jairus's little daughter there was no darkness in death —nothing but the fair light of that distant place in which her soul had wandered for a few hours.

"Has the Master said anything?" she might ask.

And would not the child tell her then of the wonderful words of promise and hope given to a poor thief who was nailed to another cross by the Master's side?

"To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

The little girl who had herself come back from Paradise must have known something of what it was like.

John, too, must have heard those strange and beautiful words as he stood with Mary, Christ's mother, leaning on his young shoulder, by the sad and holy cross. Long afterwards, when he was quite an old man, prisoner on an island, John, too, had a vision of the Paradise to which the Master promised to show the dying thief the way.

So the little daughter of Jairus would just go on smiling dreamily in the garden as the shadows closed in, deeper and deeper, upon the earth. I think, perhaps, when the darkness was at its deepest, she would fall fast asleep, so that when the other child came back, pale with sorrow, she would open her eyes in quiet joy, and the other child would look at her in wonder.

"The Master is dead," the child would tell her. "I asked why they had killed Him, and they told me because He wanted to be our King—and Cæsar is King!"

But would not Jairus's little daughter know better? "The Master is our King," she would answer. "And He is not dead. I have been asleep under the olive-trees! I seemed to go back into that beautiful country where I was when I was thought to be dead. The angels were there—oh, so many, standing and listening! It was twilight, and I saw a long path with flowers. Then a great star seemed to hang over the path—you remember the star when the Master was born? Then, through the light of the Star He came! He smiled at me, just as He smiled always on the shore at home. He had a crown of thorns on, you said, a little while ago. It had turned into a crown of stars, and there were roses in His hands, so that you could not see the wounds. I think a little child-angel had laid them there as He came up the path. He is not dead—any more than I was dead."

"But will He come back? Oh, will He come back?"

And Jairus's little daughter would answer: "Yes. I am quite sure that, for a little time, He will come back—just as I came back."

His Name Shall Be Called Wonderful

MANY of the people of Jerusalem said that the Master was dead and would never more come back to the hills of Galilee or the woods of Olivet.

Joseph of Arimathea had taken His body from the cross, and had laid it reverently in the rocky cave in the garden where in the last story we fancied Jairus's daughter had sat. Soldiers were put to guard it, and the women who had loved the Lord Jesus had watched, weeping, as a great stone was rolled into the opening of the cave, so that the inside was all closed up and dark. Then the women had gone away down the road to their homes in Jerusalem; and Mary, the mother of Jesus, had been taken by John to a quiet house there—a house that must have belonged to his relations in the city. Simon Peter had gone with John, for, you know, they were great friends.

So the night passed quietly, and the next day, which was the Jews' Sabbath, was spent by everybody in rest. But on the third night a strange and wonderful thing happened.

The Roman soldiers had kept watch ever since the cave had been sealed up by the stone. Now they had grown tired with their long vigil, and would gladly have fallen asleep. All at once, through the dark stillness of the garden, came a long, low rumbling, like an earthquake.

It echoed among the dark cypresses, and across the valley that ran right through the very heart of Jerusalem. It roused the soldiers, and they were very frightened. Then, after a few minutes, the sound died quite away.

No light was showing yet in the east, but presently, coming along the road from where the dark roofs of the houses clustered, there might have been seen the lights of three lanterns. They twinkled like fireflies in the distance, and came nearer and nearer to the garden. They were carried by three women—Mary, the mother of James, and another who was called Salome, and Mary Magdalene, who had followed the Lord Jesus from her home near Capernaum. They came towards the garden in the darkness, talking together very sadly, and bringing spices in little glass bowls, with which they meant to sprinkle the soft, white linen clothes in which the body of the Master had been folded before it was placed in the little cave.

They entered the gate and went inside, stepping softly over the grass and among the tall black cypress trees, and asking each other in whispers whom they could find to roll away the big stone. So they reached the rocky part of the garden, where the body of Christ had been laid.

When they got there, they saw that the stone had already been rolled away, and that the Roman soldiers were crouched and huddled up with fear. Lifting their lanterns, the women looked inside the open cave, and saw that it was still and empty, with only the linen clothes lying where the body of Jesus had rested three days ago.

Mary Magdalene turned quickly away, sobbing with grief. She thought someone had stolen the body of Christ,

and she ran back to the town to tell the disciples. The other women stood, hushed and troubled, by the cave, asking each other in low voices what could have happened. As they talked, all at once there was a great shining in the dark garden, and they saw that an angel was seated on the stone, and that others were within the cave.

The angels gave the women the first Easter message:

"Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spake unto you while He was yet in Galilee!"

Then the shining angels told the women to go and give the disciples these tidings of joy.

* * * * *

Mary Magdalene had already wakened Peter and John, and they, too, were hurrying through the dark morning towards the garden. When they got there, all was again still and deserted. The women had hastened off in different directions, and the Roman soldiers had fled. Peter and John looked into the cave, and saw that it was empty, but for the linen clothes, just as Mary Magdalene had said. But they did not see the angels, and they went back home, wondering and disturbed.

Only Mary Magdalene still stayed alone in the garden.

The dawn was beginning to break now, and to show clear and pale among the trees. The blue rock-doves that had their nests quite close to the little cave commenced to murmur and coo, and the flowers smelt more sweetly than ever. But Mary Magdalene noticed none of these things. Her lantern had gone out, her long robe was wet with dew, and her tears fell on the bowl of spices which she still held in her

hands. She was nearly heart-broken because she could not find the body of the Lord.

Then there came again the wonderful shining inside the cave. And she, too, stooped and saw the angels.

They asked why she wept. She answered that it was because she did not know where people had laid the dear form of her Master.

At that moment she heard a movement behind, and a gentle voice asked why she was crying. She thought it must be the gardener speaking, and begged him to tell her if he knew where the Master's body had been laid. Then the figure at which she gazed through her tears became clearer, and the eyes that met hers were full of love. And the Master's own tender tones fell on her ears.

"Mary!" He said.

Just one word, but she knew! As she fell on her knees and worshipped, the full morning broke. There stood the living Lord Jesus, in the glory of the sunshine, with the dewy flowers opening wide their petals about Him, and the larks soaring towards heaven, pouring out their souls in song.

In the Village of Emmaus

DO YOU want to know where the Lord Jesus went first of all, after He rose from death in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea?

Well, I think He went to visit the different places in the country-side where He had healed the sick and made the lame to walk.

Because this is the story of what happened late on that first wonderful Easter Day.

All the disciples in Jerusalem were telling each other what Mary Magdalene had seen. You know that a number of visitors had gone to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast—and it was the first day of the week in the city as well. Late in the afternoon everybody started, as usual, to go back home. Among them were two disciples from a little village called Emmaus, which was built in the middle of the grassy plains three-score furlongs, or about six miles, from Jerusalem.

These two talked very earnestly together as they walked towards their home, carrying their empty baskets. They knew all about the Lord Jesus of Nazareth, and were among those who had heard Him teach and had seen Him cure the sick with a touch and a word. They knew, too, that those who hated Him had tried to kill Him because those who loved Him called Him the King.

They reminded each other of the wonderful star that had

appeared in Bethlehem thirty-three years before, and of the angels among the olive-trees, and of the Wise Men who came to worship the little baby in the cave.

As they talked, they saw a stranger coming towards them over the plain from the direction of Jerusalem.

The stranger joined them, asking what they were talking about so earnestly, and why they were so sad. They told Him that the Lord Jesus who, they believed, was the little baby the angels had sung about, and who they had thought would be the great King promised to the Jews, had been crucified; and that though His body had gone away, and Mary Magdalene said she had seen Him alive again, yet nobody else had done so, and they found the story hard to believe. The stranger looked at them with wise wonderful eyes, and began to talk.

He told them many things about the promised King, and they began to understand that there were two Kingdoms—one with a palace and a garden that they could see—like Herod's—and another with many palaces and gardens that they could not see—like the lovely place the daughter of Jairus had dreamt about. As the stranger talked, they reached the village, and the disciples begged Him to come in and have supper, for the sun was setting, and night coming on.

He went in with them and sat down to supper. Taking a piece of bread, He said grace. Then He broke the bread, and gave to each of them a piece. As He did so, a change seemed to come over Him; and they saw that He was no stranger, but the Lord Jesus Himself.

As they gazed in amazement, He vanished out of their sight.

They could not wait then to finish their supper, but put on their cloaks, took their sticks in their hands, and hurried out into the night to go back and tell the disciples at Jerusalem. As they went out into the starlight they looked across the shadowy pastures that lay on every side.

Shepherds were there, as usual, with their sheep. And though the angels did not come to the plains of Palestine that night, I think the echo of their song came back among the stars:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace, goodwill to men!"

The Firelight On the Shore

THE young fisher, John, whom Jesus loved so much, was seated in the bow of a ship that rocked softly on the sea. It was a very still night, with a soft, dark sky, sparkling with thousands of stars. The nets were spread on the left-hand side of the boat, but so far, the fishermen had not caught anything. John, looking out into the starry darkness, was dreaming and thinking of the Lord Jesus. All the disciples knew now that He had risen from the dead, for they had more than once seen Him and spoken to Him. John was wishing very much that He would show Himself again. He missed the Master dreadfully, though it was a deep joy to know that He was alive again.

Well, as John sat in the boat, watching the stars high above the dark hills, suddenly he saw a little glow of red light on the shore, among the shadows. It showed all clear and crimson for a moment, not much larger than a flower. Then it spread and widened, throwing a lovely brightness on the ripples that broke close at hand. John now saw that it was a small, steady fire made of charcoal; and he thought he could discern the shadowy figure of a man standing near, feeding the flame.

As John watched, a feeling of deep awe and gladness came over him. He felt sure, somehow, that it was the Lord

Himself. He believed this, because Christ had promised to come to Galilee. Then all the fishermen heard a clear voice, calling through the darkness and over the water; and at that moment dawn began to break.

"Children! Have you anything to eat?"

The fishermen could not see the face of that dim, mysterious figure by the fire on the brink of the sea, and they did not know who it was. They called out, rather sorrowfully, that, so far, they had not caught any fish at all. In reply, the voice came over the water again:

"Throw your nets over to the right-hand side of the boat!"

The fishermen hauled up their nets as quickly as they could, and let them out again on the other side of the ship. At once the nets were filled with bright, gleaming fishes.

John knew then, for certain, who it was that stood on the shore by the little fire in the growing light. He said to Peter under his breath: "It is the Lord!"

Peter gave a low exclamation of wonder and joy. Then he sprang straight out of the boat into the shallow water, and waded to the shore, in haste to worship Christ again. The other fishermen started rowing towards the land, dragging the heavy, fish-laden nets after them; and Simon Peter, who after all, had not yet dared to speak to the shadowy figure on the beach, helped them draw the nets to land.

The nets were full and shining with fishes, looking as if they were covered with silver as they lay on the pale, dawn-lit shingle. Yet the nets were not broken. The fishermen climbed, one by one, out of the boat, and drew nearer to the Lord Jesus, as He stood quietly by the small bright fire. Then they saw that He had been preparing food for them—broil-

He is Risen

ing fish on the charcoal and dividing little loaves of bread. Then, although they were still too awed to speak, He talked to them.

"Come and dine." He Himself gave them the fish and the bread, just as He had given food to the crowds of people out of the little boy's basket up in the very hills that, tipped with the light of morning, were about them now.

John crept nearer to the Lord Jesus in the growing brightness, and at last the lad was nestling close to Him again, his heart almost bursting with gladness and love.

For a long time the Master sat and talked with the fishermen, as He used to do in the days that had passed. He said more, perhaps, to Simon Peter than to any of the others. Three times He asked him, as if half in doubt, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" And Peter, grieved, answered that Christ must know he loved Him. And then Jesus told Peter to feed His lambs and His sheep—the grown-up people, and the children, who would believe in His Word in all the long years to come.

* * * * *

Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples after this, when they were back in Jerusalem. He came to them as they sat quietly talking at supper, and taught them once more. Then He rose, and told them to come with Him towards Bethany.

You remember the brook where the children gathered the myrtles, and the stony mountain-side that had once rung with "Hosannas" as Christ rode down upon the colt? This was the way He led the disciples now. They followed Him across the stream, up into the flowery slopes above. Then He turned His loving face towards them, held up His hands, and blessed them. As they knelt to receive the blessing, some of them might see a soft golden cloud come over the hill-top,

drifting through the silver olive-boughs, and lying, delicately lovely, upon the grass and flowers. This golden cloud perhaps floated over the figure of the Master; His robes, His hands and His face would look bright and shining beneath it. At last, He seemed to be folded into the very heart of the glory, and it was as if there were angels' wings about Him, drawing Him upwards to the sky.

When the mist floated softly away, the Master had vanished. Out of the bosom of the golden cloud He had gone back home to God.

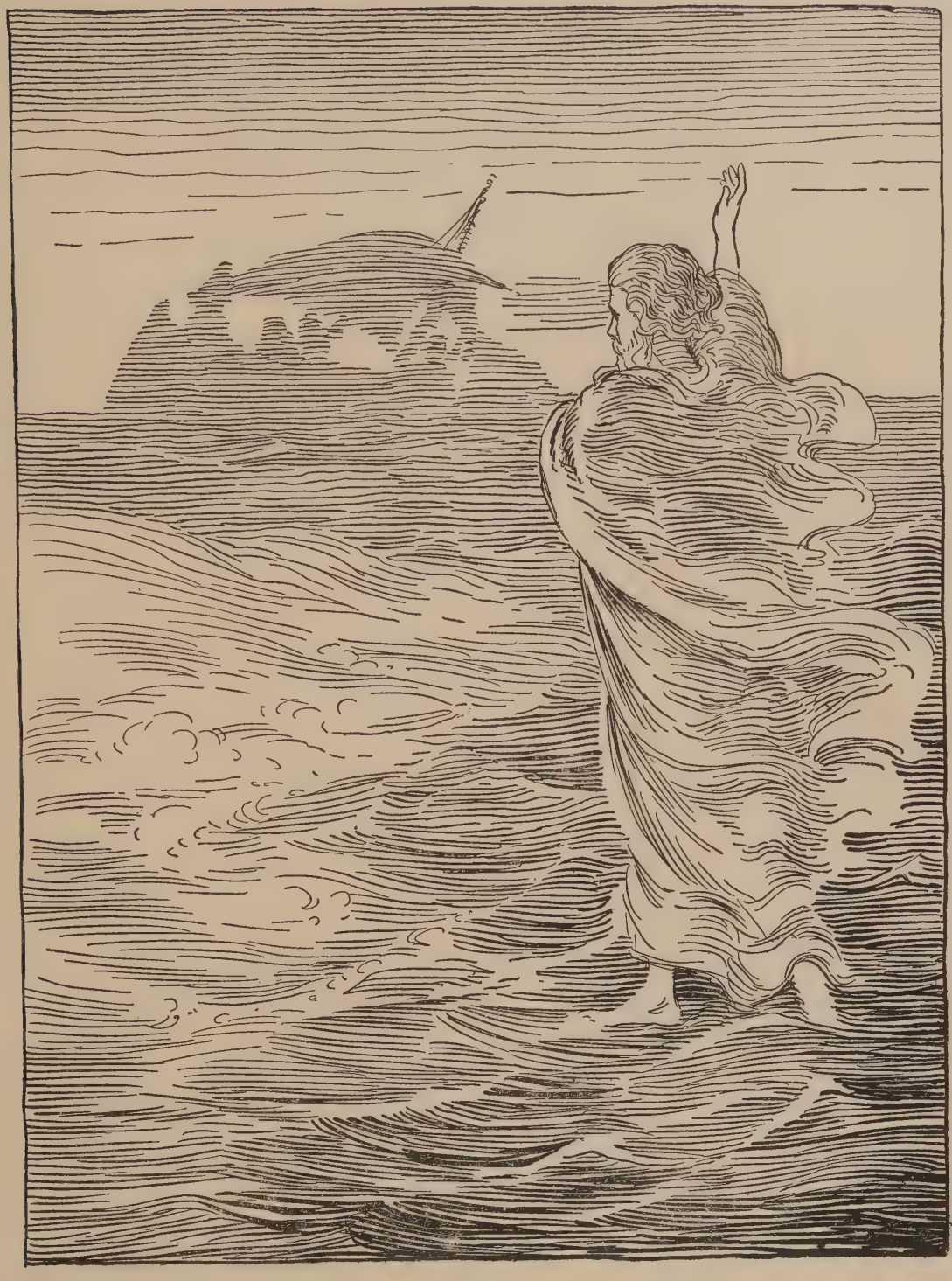
St. Peter and the Angel

T. PETER, the servant of Christ, lay in prison awaiting his execution, ready and willing to lay down his life in the cause of his King.

Many years had passed since that long ago day, when his brother had come to him and eagerly told him, "We have found the Christ," and he had first looked upon the beloved face of his Lord and Master. He had been a bold, active, young fisherman then, proud of his strength and his courage, and when the Master had called him to leave his nets and his boat, and to be instead "a fisher of men," he had thrown himself into the new work with all the energy and keenness he possessed.

Then came that dark, bitter time when the King had looked for courage in His bold follower, and had found cowardice—when St. Peter had deserted and denied his Lord. Could he ever forget how he had boastfully declared, "I will lay down my life for Thy sake," and how the sorrowful answer had come, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice."

He had wept very bitterly when those words had come true, and the crowing of the cock had reminded him that he was a traitor and a coward. But no tears could wash away the remembrance of his Master's face when for a moment



Christ walking on the Water

He turned and looked upon his cowardly servant.

All his pride then had been crushed and humbled, all his courage lost; but one true thing remained—his love for his Master. It was this love that had helped to make him once more a trusted friend and follower of the King. After that Resurrection morning his Lord had come to him, and had three times asked him the question which was to wipe out all traces of his three denials.

"Lovest thou me?" asked Jesus.

"Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee," cried St. Peter. And then came the command, "Feed my sheep."

Ever since that day St. Peter had striven to do his Master's bidding. There had been no signs of cowardice now. He was the boldest of the followers of the King; and so it was that, when a great persecution of the Christians was begun, he was one of the first to be seized and flung into prison, with a special company of soldiers to guard him.

It was springtime, and soon all the earth would be decked with flowers, and new life would be waking everywhere. It was the time when, many years ago now, his Lord had risen, and made Easter day a day of triumph.

Now it had been decided that when Easter dawned the people should enjoy the pleasure of seeing one of the King's followers put to death, and St. Peter waited quietly in his dungeon for the morning to break.

All the Christians in their houses and secret meeting-places were praying for him. He was sure of this, and the thought comforted him; so he settled himself to sleep peacefully between his soldier guards, to whom he was bound by

two strong chains. Outside in the starlight more soldiers were keeping watch, but in the prison all was dark.

Then, all of a sudden, the darkness vanished, and a light shone clear and bright. It was neither starlight nor the glow of dawn, but an angel stood there in shining robes, and the dungeon was filled with a glorious radiance.

"Arise up quickly," sounded a voice in St. Peter's ear, as the angel bent over him and roused him from his sleep. St. Peter struggled to obey, forgetting his chains; but as the strong hand of the angel helped him to rise, the chains slipped from his hands and left him free.

Again the angel spoke, and bade him clothe himself and put his sandals upon his feet and wind his cloak around him. All this St. Peter did without questioning. He was sure all this was only a dream or a vision. Presently he would awake, to find himself chained as usual to the sleeping guards.

But again the voice sounded, "Follow me," and St. Peter followed the shining messenger through the prison door and past the soldiers who kept guard outside. Every door silently opened to let them pass. Not a soldier challenged them; and when at last they came to the iron gate which led into the city, that too swung back to let them through. Into the city streets they went—streets which St. Peter knew well —and suddenly he found himself alone, with no guiding light and no angel companion.

It was not a dream. The cool night air blew upon his cheek, the stars were quietly shining overhead, and he knew every house of the street in which he stood. Then the truth flashed upon him. God had sent His angel to deliver him, and he was free. The people were baulked of their prey, and

the Easter dawn would bring him life, not death.

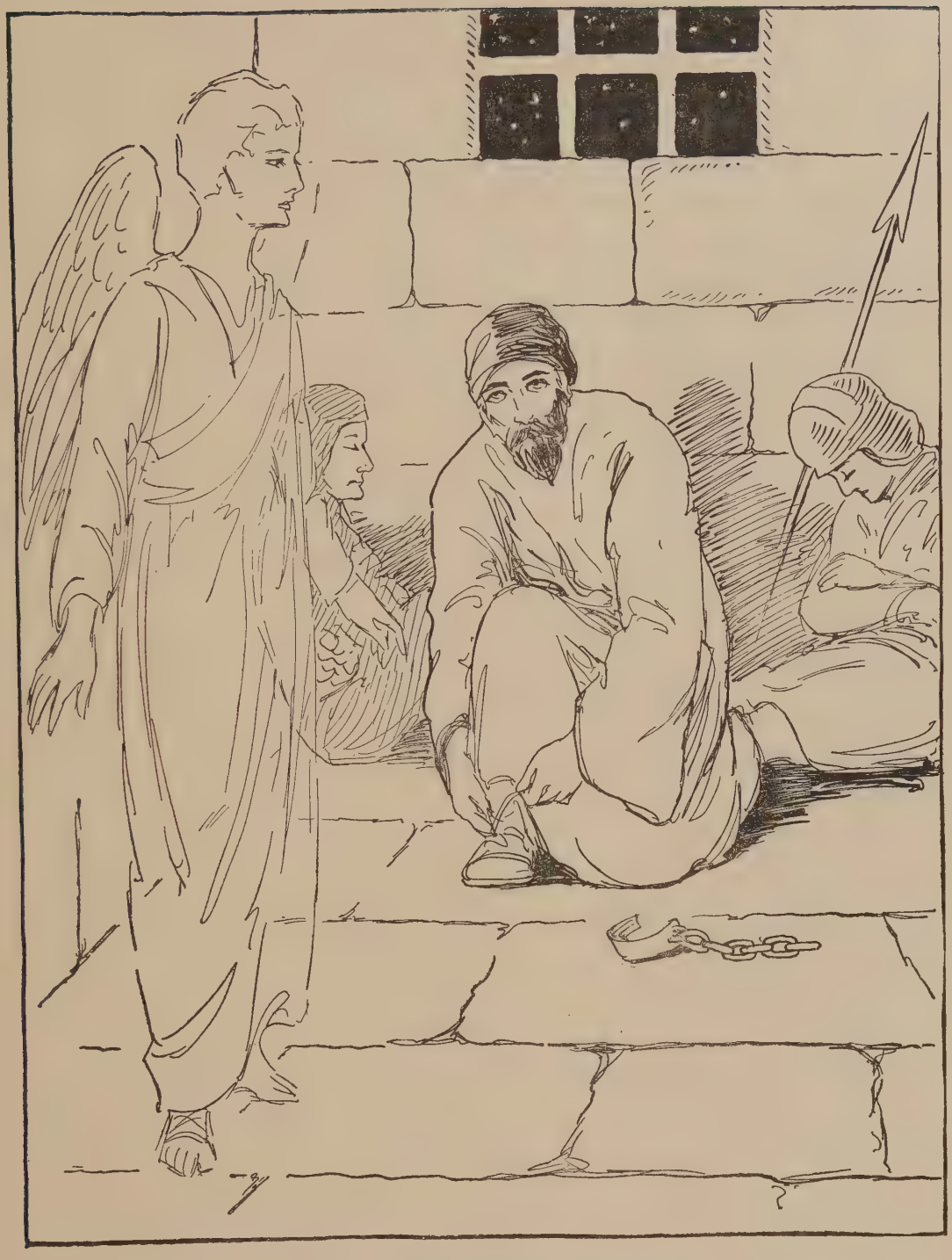
There had been no sleep for St. Peter's friends that night. In a house close by they were still praying and watching for the dawn, when a knock sounded at the door of the gate, and a young maid, called Rhoda, went hastily to see who was there. In those terrible times a knock might mean some fresh terror. The maid would not open the door until she knew who it was who knocked, and she listened intently to the voice which answered her from without.

It was a voice she knew, she was quite sure of it. Overjoyed and full of wonder, she did not stop to open the gate, but ran swiftly back to tell the others. The very man they were praying for was standing there, knocking at the door, she declared.

"Thou art mad," they answered her almost roughly. This was no time for idle imaginations. But there was no doubt she believed what she said. There was a ring of absolute certainty in her voice, and at the last some of them began to think that perhaps it was St. Peter's spirit which had stood there.

But the knocking still sounded on the door. Could a spirit knock so loudly? At least it was wiser to open the door and see who was there. And so at last the gate was cautiously opened, and St. Peter stood before them.

The cries of surprise and delight were checked almost as soon as uttered. There was much need still for caution, and St. Peter held up his hand to command silence. Then, in breathless hush, they led him in, and he told them the story of his deliverance, and how at the angel's touch the chains had fallen from his hands, and the bolts and bars had slipped back.



St. Peter and the Angel

So for a time St. Peter was still free to carry on his Master's work. But the end, when it came, was as welcome to him as the shining angel had been, for this time it was through the gates of death that he passed into the presence of the King.

We cannot be quite sure by what death the old fisherman saint glorified his Master, but people think that it was at Rome that he gave up his life. An old story tells us that St. Peter was fleeing away from that city to escape death, when, on the great road leading to Rome, he met his Master walking wearily towards the city, carrying a cross upon His back.

"Master, whither goest Thou?" asked St. Peter.

"I go to Rome to be crucified in thy place," answered the King.

Then St. Peter knew that he had done wrong in leaving his post of duty at which God had put him, and he turned back bravely to meet his death.

It was the same death as that Master had suffered; only, to the humble, loving soul of His servant, it seemed too great an honour to die as his Master had done, and he begged that he might be crucified head downwards, to mark the difference between himself and his King.

Saul, The Persecutor

IN THE far-off city of Tarsus, at the time when Jesus lived at Nazareth, a little boy was born, to whom his parents gave the name of Saul. He was a Roman citizen, because he was born in the Roman province; but he was also a Jew, and was brought up as a very strict Jew indeed. As soon as he could understand anything he was taught lessons out of the Old Testament; and the very first thing he learned would be to reach up and touch the metal box which was fastened to the side of the door, and which held some verses of the Bible written on parchment. Then he would reverently kiss the little hand which had touched the box, just as he saw the grown-up people do.

Although the Bible was his great lesson book, as he grew older there were many other and more difficult things he had to learn; and by the time he was a man he knew all that a strict Pharisee should know, and was very wise and learned indeed.

Rumours, of course, had reached the far-off city of Tarsus about the new Jewish teacher, whom some people called a prophet, and some even said was the Christ. There were tales of His wonderful cures and the miracles He worked; then the news of His Crucifixion and how His followers declared He had risen from the dead. But Saul only grew

angry as he listened. The Christ he looked for was a king, not a peasant of Nazareth, and he hated the people who called themselves His followers and said He was the King.

It seemed no use to punish these people, to beat and imprison them, or even to condemn them to death. Nothing daunted them or silenced them. Day by day they grew bolder and bolder, day by day more and more people joined them and shared their belief. It was time to put an end to all this, and Saul eagerly threw himself into the work, determined to stamp out this new religion. Those followers of the Nazarene might try to hide, but his spies would find them and drag them out; they might think to escape him by fleeing to other cities, but he would follow them wherever they went. He was so busy hunting the poor Christians that he had now no time to do anything else.

It happened just then that one of the chief of those Christians, whose name was Stephen, had been seized at Jerusalem and dragged before the High Priest; and hearing this, Saul eagerly hastened to the great city, that he might help in the trial and punishment.

Surely, as he watched that trial, he must have wondered what made these men so bold and fearless. There stood the young man Stephen, alone amongst his enemies, who crowded round him like a pack of hungry wolves eager to devour a lamb. No sign of terror showed in his calm face. Absolutely fearless, he stood out to meet his accusers and make his defence. The lying witnesses could not meet his straightforward gaze, but watched him with shifty eyes, and acknowledged even to themselves that his face was as the face of an angel.

But all unmoved Saul looked on, and when at last the sentence was given that the prisoner should be stoned, there was no pity in his heart, but rather a fierce joy as he went to look on at the execution.

Steadfastly and unmoved, Stephen stood and faced his murderers. Then, looking up towards heaven, a great glory seemed to shine there as if reflected from above. Little wonder that there was no room for fear in Stephen's heart; for there, as he gazed upwards, he saw his Master's face, and knew that He was waiting at God's right hand to welcome his faithful servant.

The cruel stones came hurtling through the air. Little by little the life was beaten out of his body, but never a sign of shrinking did he show. Only as he knelt there the same prayer rose to his lips which his Master had prayed upon the Cross: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

That was the end. Death, stooping down over the poor, bruised body, showed none of its terrors, but was like a kindly sleep, bringing only healing, rest, and peace.

Saul, looking on, saw all this, but still he fiercely held to his own opinions. The man deserved to die. It was the murderers who were right, not the martyr.

But perhaps the remembrance of St. Stephen's face troubled him more than he knew, and made him try to escape from it by hunting the poor Christians more fiercely than ever, so that soon the very name of Saul was a terror to all the followers of the Master.

He hunted them from their hiding places. Wherever they fled he followed them. It seemed as if he could not rest; and when news was brought to him that many of the Chris-

tians had found a refuge in the city of Damascus, five days' journey from Jerusalem, he prepared at once for a fresh hunt. Taking a guard of soldiers with him, he set out with all haste, anxious to reach Damascus as soon as possible.

At last the city came in sight in all its fair beauty of white buildings, set in a garden of green trees and silver olive groves. But Saul was not thinking of its beauty.

It was mid-day, and most travellers rested then in some shade where they might escape the blinding heat of the sun; but Saul was in too great a hurry to rest, and he pressed forward with his band of soldiers.

The fierce heat beat down upon the white road, and dazzled their eyes; but it was not the sunlight which suddenly wrapped them round with such a blinding glare that the whole company fell with their faces to the ground, as if struck by lightning. The light was brighter than any sunlight, and from the midst of the light came a strange sound—a sound which to the soldiers seemed only a confused noise, but which Saul knew to be the voice of God.

"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" said the voice.

From the blinded helpless figure lying there upon the ground the words burst out, "Who art Thou, Lord?"

"I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest," came the voice again.

Saul's proud, fierce spirit was broken. He was as humble as a little child as he listened to that voice. "What shall I do, Lord?" he asked.

There, in the midst of the light, stood Jesus Christ, the King whom he had believed was an impostor. Now, seeing

Him as St. Stephen had seen Him, he knew that it was the Master, the Captain of his soul, who spoke to him.

There was a great work before him, said the voice; but first he must go on to the city and wait there until a messenger should come and tell him what he was to do.

The terrified, listening soldiers began to recover. The light had vanished, the noise had ceased, and they stood up upon their feet again. But Saul still lay there, trembling and bewildered, and when they went to raise him they found that he was blind, and could only hold out groping hands in the darkness. So they went on their way as best they could, and led Saul stumbling along the road, until they reached the city.

There for three black days he waited. But in the darkness he learned to pray, and on the third day God's messenger came, and brought light and comfort. The blindness was lifted not only from his eyes, but also from his heart, and he saw clearly that now he must obey the King and fight His battles.

At first the Christians would scarcely believe that the man they so feared was now their friend, and they still distrusted him; but as time went on they were forced to believe in the great change. Just as thoroughly as he had once led the persecution, he now worked with all his might to help them, eager to show his love for the Master, no matter how much pain and suffering fell to his share.

And before many weeks were past he began to suffer with his fellow-Christians. As he had persecuted others, now he himself was the persecuted, and the Jews made up their minds that he must be seized and put to death. Soldiers

were set to guard the city gates, and orders were given to arrest him if he tried to escape.

Now the city walls around Damascus were so solid and broad that many houses were built upon them, and their windows looked over the surrounding fields across the moat below. Some of Saul's friends lived in one of these wall houses, and they felt sure that if Saul was to escape the best plan would be to lower him from one of the windows, out of sight of the city guards. So they took a large basket, and fastened it with a rope, and when Saul had climbed into the basket, they lowered it slowly down against the wall, swaying to and fro until it touched the ground.

No one was in sight. It was easy now to cross the moat and make his way across the fields. Saul had for that time, at least, escaped his enemies.

Saul let down in a Basket

St. Paul, The Servant of Christ

THREE years had passed since Saul—who was now known as Paul—had come proudly riding along the road that led from Jerusalem to Damascus, full of power and importance, backed by his guard of soldiers. Now he was stealing back that same way alone and friendless, fleeing for his life. Then he had been the hunter, now he was himself the hunted.

Others might think it a sad change, but St. Paul knew it was a glorious one. There was no fear in his heart, only a great joy; he did not feel in the least lonely, for he had found the best Friend of all, and he rejoiced to have the honour of suffering for his King.

There, at Jerusalem, he knew he would find many friends. St. Peter, the disciple of Jesus, might be there, and the old fisherman saint would tell him all he longed to hear about the wonderful life of the King, and would even repeat the very words which Jesus had spoken. These words now seemed to St. Paul more precious than any gold or silver.

No great welcome, however, awaited him at Jerusalem. His name was still held in terror by those poor, persecuted Christians. It seemed but yesterday that they had seen him watch with triumphant eyes the sufferings of St. Stephen, and it was difficult to believe that he was now their friend.

The learned men and the rulers, too, looked upon him with suspicion. Here was a man who had been the keenest of all in persecuting the Christians, and now he came preaching their religion. The simplest and safest plan would be to have nothing to do with him at all.

And so St. Paul found no welcome at Jerusalem, and he made up his mind to return to Tarsus, his native town, and carry the good news to more distant lands. The Master had said, "Go yet into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Strangers and foreigners were to have a share in Christ's kingdom as well as the Jews. It was a dark world, full of evil and the power of Satan. St. Paul held in his hand the lighted torch which was to carry light into distant countries whose names even he did not know. At that very time Roman soldiers were landing on a far-away little gray island of the north, and holding it with a firm, conquering grip. It was a far cry from Tarsus to Britain, but gleams from the lighted torch were to reach even there in time.

Meanwhile St. Paul began his missionary work in places round about Palestine. There was little glory and much suffering in that work which he was doing for his Master. Many a time he was cruelly beaten, and with bruised, torn back, was thrown out of the city where he had been trying to tell the people about their King. Sometimes his wonderful words and the charm of his speaking held men spellbound, and the light spread in a marvellous way; and then again would come a check, and the very people who had listened to him and applauded him were ready to stone him to death.

It was necessary all this time for St. Paul to work with his hands as well as his head, that he might earn enough

money for his daily bread, and he was a splendid worker as well as a preacher. His trade was tentmaking, and as he sat and wove the strong haircloth, his thoughts would go wandering to those distant lands to which he longed to carry the light. How splendid it would be to go the whole length and breadth of the great Roman Empire—even to Rome itself, that queen city of the world.

Then one night as he lay asleep he dreamed a dream, and saw by his bedside a man from Macedonia, that country across the sea, who came with a message of invitation.

"Come over and help us," said the dream figure. The words rang in St. Paul's ears as he awoke, and the dream decided him. He would travel still farther afield; he would leave Asia, and cross over to Europe.

The Jews were not greatly loved in Roman cities, and St. Paul found many difficulties and dangers awaiting him. Once at the great town of Philippi he and his companion, Silas, were set upon by the crowd, and very roughly handled. There was every sign of a riot, and the Roman magistrates gave orders to the soldiers to beat the two Jews with rods, and to quiet the people. So St. Paul and St. Silas were dragged off to the market-place, stripped to the waist, and tied to the common whipping-post. In vain they declared they were Roman citizens, and not slaves. No one listened to them, and they were flogged in a terrible way, and afterwards thrown into the common jail, a place more fit for beasts than men. Here in the dark dungeon hole they lay, their feet fastened into the wooden stocks fixed in the wall, that there might be no chance of their escape.

Tortured and half-dead, in that noisome prison St. Paul

and his companion never let go their courage for one moment. It was for their King they suffered, and that made all suffering easy. In the darkness they sang the old Jewish psalms they knew so well, and the sound of their singing went floating away to the other prison cells. It was a strange, almost awesome thing to hear music in that dreadful place, and the other prisoners listened in terrified wonder.

Night came on. The crowds that had gathered in the market-place around the whipping-post were scattered, and the rioters had gone home. All was quiet; not even a breath of wind stirred the still air, when suddenly a strange shiver seemed to pass over the city, a curious trembling in earth and air. Then came a low, rumbling sound, and a great rocking, as walls swayed and fell, doors burst open, and the very foundations of the great prison shook.

It was an earthquake. The head jailer, leaping to his feet, rushed to his prison wards. The doors were open, as he feared; the stocks were loosened from the walls. All the prisoners must have escaped, and that would mean death for him. In despair, he drew his sword to put an end to himself at once.

But St. Paul had seen the glittering sword and the jailer's despairing face, and guessed what he meant to do.

"Do thyself no harm," he cried, "for we are all here."

Hurriedly the jailer called for a light, and sprang into the prison. It was quite true—not one of the prisoners had attempted to escape; and in his relief and thankfulness he threw himself down at St. Paul's feet, and cried out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" It had suddenly flashed upon him that what these men had preached was true, and that

they were indeed the servants of the true King.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," came the swift answer.

Then, later, in the jailer's house, when the two prisoners had had their wounds washed and dressed, and had been carefully fed, the whole family listened while St. Paul spoke to them, and told them how they too might serve the King. So the light of Christ shone into another dark place.

After many perilous journeys to and fro, St. Paul at last returned to Jerusalem, where, among his own people, he might have looked for safety and peace. But the Jews were more furious with him and his preaching than ever, and were determined to kill him, and would have torn him in pieces had it not been for the Roman soldiers, who rescued him out of their hands, and sent him away secretly to another place.

Then, after a weary time of waiting, he was at last brought to trial, and Festus, the governor, asked him if he would rather be sent back to Jerusalem to be judged by his own people.

But St. Paul answered boldly and decidedly: "To the Jews I have done no wrong: I appeal unto Cæsar."

It was a bold appeal, and meant that the prisoner demanded to be taken to Rome; but it was an appeal that every Roman citizen had a right to make.

"Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar?" asked the governor. "Then to Cæsar shall thou go."

Paul and some other prisoners were then put in charge of Julius, a centurion, and went aboard a ship which was to sail by the coasts of Asia; but after two or three days, the winds

being from the wrong direction, they landed at a city of Lycia, and there found a ship of Alexandria, sailing into Italy.

Julius put his prisoners upon this ship, and when they had sailed slowly for many days, they reached a place called the Fair Havens; but found they could not remain, as it was too small; for in all there were more than two hundred and fifty men. So when the south wind blew softly, they again set sail. But not long after, a tempest arose, and when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, they could only let her drive.

The next day they lightened the ship, the third day they threw the tackling overboard; and when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and the tempest still raged, they lost all hope of reaching land. Then St. Paul took command. He told them God's angel had showed him in a vision, that they would all be saved, and he told them to steer the ship into a little bay off the island of Malta, which lay ahead of them. The sailors took courage at this, and tried to gain control of the ship.

About midnight of the fourteenth night, as they were being driven up and down by the waves, the sailors found that they were drawing near to some country. They sounded, and found it was twenty fathoms, and when they had gone a little farther, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms. Then fearing they might fall upon the rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.

Some of the sailors tried to leave the ship, by lowering a small boat, as if they were lowering anchors; but Paul discovered them. Then the soldiers cut the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

As day was coming on, Paul urged the men to eat, and told them again, they would all be saved. This cheered them greatly, and when they had eaten enough they lightened the ship as much as possible, even throwing the wheat overboard.

Then they took up the anchors, hoisted the mainsail to the wind, and made toward the shore.

But they fell into a place where two seas met, and the ship ran aground; the bow stuck fast and remained unmovable, but the stern was broken with the violence of the waves.

The soldiers thought it would be best to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. But, Julius, the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that those who could swim, should first cast themselves into the sea. And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship, escaped safely to the land.

The island people received them kindly, and kindled a fire because of the cold and the rain.

They lived on this island for three months, but finally, after many adventures arrived in Rome where the centurion delivered the prisoners to the Captain of the Guard; but Paul was allowed to live in his own house, where he wrote many epistles or letters which we may still read. Some of them tell of his sufferings.

He says, "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned; thrice I suffered ship-wreck, a night and a day, I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness,

in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness." But Paul could bear all things, through Christ who strengthened him. Nothing could weaken his faith. He visited the believers in all the places where they gathered. He wrote long letters, to them, teaching, warning and encouraging them. He spoke bravely to the fierce Romans, or to the idolatrous and learned Greeks. He was always ready to serve his Master, always ready for death, when it should please God to call him. His triumphant words ring out to-day, as clearly as when he uttered them: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

Paul and Silas

St. John, The Beloved Disciple

THE beautiful world which God in the beginning made full of sunshine and happiness was soon spolt by the sin which so swiftly crept in, and ever since there has always been sorrow and pain waiting to dim the gladness and darken the light.

But there are some good gifts of God which no pain or sorrow can spoil, that shine out like stars in a dark sky, whose light nothing can quench, and that death itself has no power to dim.

Perhaps one of the best of these gifts, the most precious thing which God can give us, is a friend; some one who understands and loves us, and whom we love and trust with all our hearts. They are rare things, these friends, worth more to us than all the riches of the world, although sometimes we think them as common as the sunshine or the flowers.

When the King of Heaven came down to earth, to live the life of common men. He too had a little company of friends around Him, who truly loved Him, and whom He loved. But among them all there was one special friend, one special gift from God, St. John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

No one else seemed to live quite as close to Jesus as he.

No one was as quick to understand the Master, to guess His wishes almost before they were put into words. St. John did not, like St. Peter, boast of his love and devotion, but he quietly followed his Master, and never left him.

Whenever it was possible, St. John was always to be found at Jesus' side. At the Last Supper, when all the sorrowing friends gathered round him, St. John was nearest, and even leaned his head against his Friend. When cruel hands had nailed the King to the Cross, it was St. John who stood close beneath, beside the only other person who had courage to be there—the Lord's dear mother.

The King, looking down, saw these two good gifts which God had given Him—His mother and His friend—and they were very precious in His eyes. To the friend He would give the most sacred thing which He had to leave behind Him.

"Woman," He said, "behold thy son," and to St. John, "Son, behold thy mother."

All through his life St. John's love had never failed. Like many other of the friends of Jesus, he suffered pains and punishments for his Master's sake; and at last, when he was an old man, worn out with suffering, he was banished to the island of Patmos, and left there alone, as it seemed, friendless and deserted.

It might well be that the lonely old man felt as if his life had been a failure, and was almost bewildered to see how evil had triumphed over good. He had not only suffered himself, but he had seen the terrible sufferings of many other servants of the King. There had been no pity for the Christians. Even young girls and children had been flung to the

wild beasts, because they would not deny their Lord. The King had been his Friend; and yet here he was, old, worn out, and alone, deserted by every one, thrust away from the sound of any human voice.

But he was not really alone. His Friend was close at hand, who had never left him, and He lifted the veil which hung between them, and showed St. John a glimpse of Heaven, a revelation of unseen things. St. John's weary eyes had been looking at the mistakes and failures and puzzles of the world, until these seemed to him bigger than anything else; now he was to see with clearer vision how wonderfully everything had been planned by God. He was to see the friends of the King sharing His glory, all sorrow, sin, and suffering forgotten, since God had wiped away all tears from their eyes.

There, upon the throne, was his dear Master, bearing still the marks of the cruel nails, "a Lamb as it had been slain." There around Him, all things in Heaven and earth bowed down and worshipped Him.

Many were the glorious things shown to St. John by God's angel, and afterwards the lonely saint on the desert island tried to write down an account of the wonders he had seen. He wrote of a golden city with its walls of jasper and its gates of pearl, of the crystal river and the jewelled throne set around with a rainbow halo, of white-robed angels and golden harps.

But all these things were as nothing compared to the sight of his Master's face, to the knowledge that his King and unchanging Friend was there, ruling all things, and that some day He would come again, when every eye would see Him.

"Behold, I come quickly," had been the comforting words of the King, when for that wonderful moment the veil had been lifted; and St. John's answer rang out full of faith now as well as love—

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

THE END